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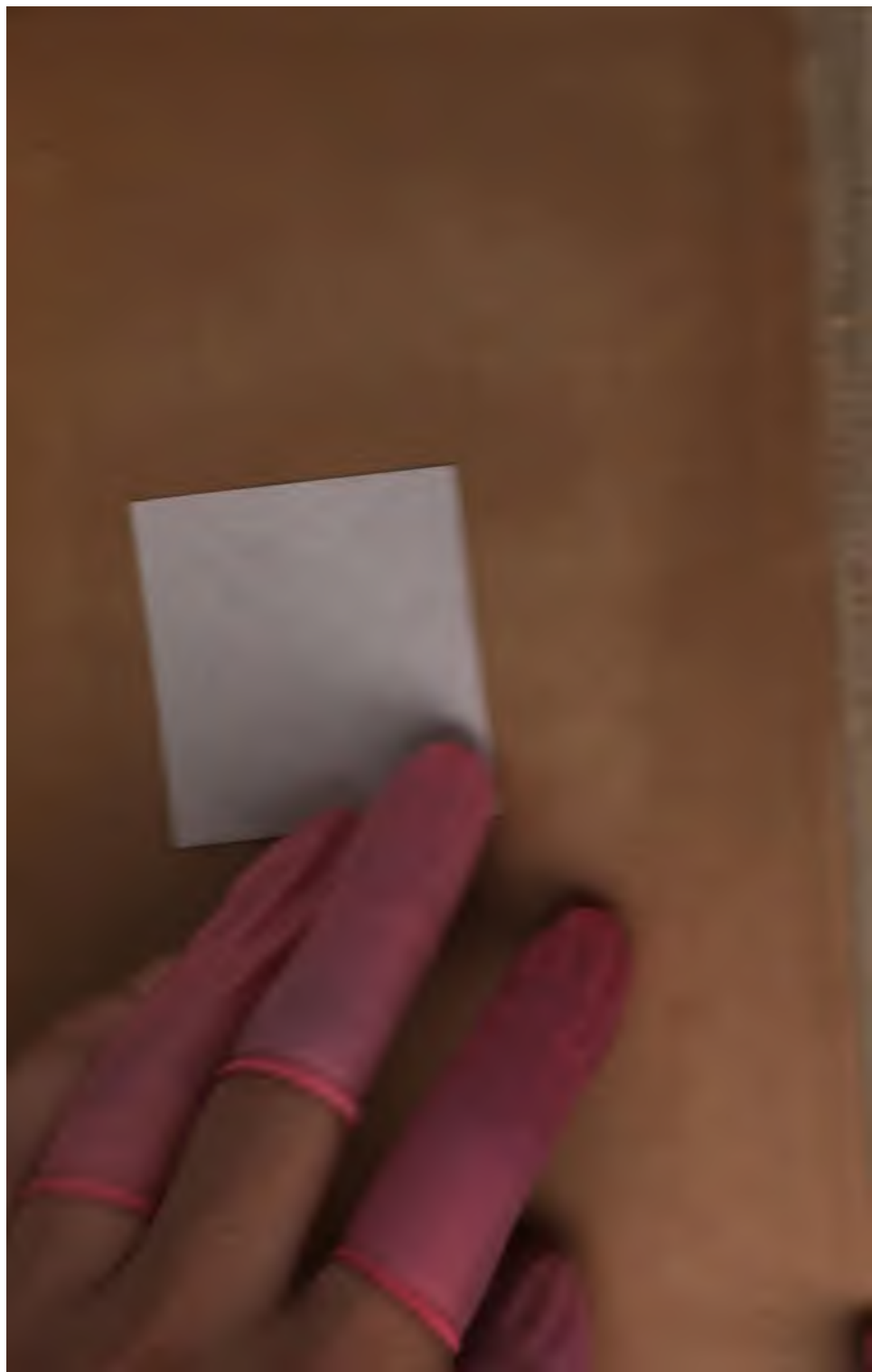
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# **STUDIES OF THE GREEK POETS**

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T. J. J. SEE  
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OF THE  
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JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

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## CHAPTER XIV

### GREEK TRAGEDY AND EURIPIDES

The Conditions for the Development of a National Drama—The Attic Audience—The Persian War—Nemesis the Cardinal Idea of Greek Tragedy—Traces of the Doctrine of Nemesis in early Greek Poetry—The Fixed Material of Greek Tragedy—Athens in the Age of Euripides—Changes introduced by him in Dramatic Art—The Law of Progress in all Art—Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides—The Treatment of *εὐψυχία* by Euripides—Menoikeus—The Death of Eteocles and Polyneices—Polyxena—Medea—Hippolytus—Electra and Orestes—Injustice done to Euripides by recent critics.

CRITICS who are contented with referring the origin of the Greek drama to the mimetic instinct inherent in humanity are apt to neglect those circumstances which render it an almost unique phenomenon in literature. If the mimetic instinct were all that is requisite for the origination of a national drama, then we should find that every race at a certain period of its development produced both tragedy and comedy. This, however, is far from being the case. A certain rude mimesis, such as the acting of descriptive dances or the jesting of buffoons and mummers, is indeed common in all ages and nations. But there are only two races which can be said to have produced the drama as a fine art originally and independently of foreign influences. These are the Greeks and the Hindhus. With reference to the Hindhus, it is even questionable whether they would have composed plays so

The mimetic  
instinct.

perfect as their famous *Sakountala* without contact with the Hellenes. All the products of the modern drama, whether tragic or comic, must be regarded as the direct progeny of the Greek stage. The habit of play-acting, continued from Athens to Alexandria, and from Rome to Byzantium, never wholly expired. The *Christus Patiens*, attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus, was an adaptation of the art of Euripides to Christian story; and the representation of *Mysteries* during the Middle Ages kept alive the dramatic tradition, until the discovery of classic literature and the revival of taste in modern Europe led to the great works of the English, Spanish, French, and subsequently of the German theatre.

Greek artistic genius.

Something more than the mere instinct of imitation, therefore, caused the Greeks to develop their drama. Like sculpture, like the epic, the drama was one of the artistic forms through which the genius of the Greek race expressed itself — by which, to use the language of philosophical mysticism, it fulfilled its destiny as a prime agent in the manifestation of the World-Spirit. In their realisation of that perfect work of art for which they seem to have been specially ordained, the drama was no less requisite than sculpture and architecture, than the epic, the ode, and the idyll.

National activity and a great public.

Two conditions, both of which the Greeks enjoyed in full perfection at the moment of their first dramatic energy, seem to be requisite for the production of a great and thoroughly national drama. These are, first, an era of intense activity or a period succeeding immediately to one of excitement, by which the nation has been nobly agitated; secondly, a public worthy of the dramatist, spurring him on by its enthusiasm and intelligence to the creation of high works of art. A glance at the history of the drama in modern times will prove how necessary these conditions are. It was the gigantic effort which we English people made in our struggle with

Rome and Spain, it was the rousing of our keenest thought and profoundest emotion by the Reformation, which prepared us for the Elizabethan drama, by far the greatest, next to the Greek, in literature. The nation lived in action, and delighted to see great actions imitated. Races in repose or servitude, like the Hebrews under the Roman Empire, may, in their state of spiritual exaltation and by effort of pondering on the mysteries of God and man, give birth to new theosophies; but it requires a free and active race, in which young and turbulent blood is flowing, to produce a drama. In England, again, at that time, there was a great public. All classes crowded to the theatres. London, in whose streets and squares martyrs had been burned, on whose quays the pioneers of the Atlantic and Pacific, after disputing the Indies with Spain, lounged and enjoyed their leisure, supplied an eager audience, delighting in the dreams of poets which recalled to mind the realities of their own lives, appreciating the passion of tragedy, enjoying the mirth of comic incident. The men who listened to *Othello* had both done and suffered largely; their own experience was mirrored in the scenes of blood and struggle set before them. These two things, therefore—the awakening of the whole English nation to activity, and the presence of a free and haughty audience—made our drama great.

In the Spanish drama only one of the requisite conditions was fulfilled—activity. Before they began to write plays the Spaniards had expelled the Moors, discovered the New World, and raised themselves to the first place among European nations. But there was not the same free audience in Spain as in England. Papal despotism and the tyranny of the Court checked and coerced the drama, so that, with all its richness and imaginative splendour, the Spanish theatre is inferior to the English. The French drama suffered still more from the same kind of restriction. Subject to the canons of scholastic pedants, tied down to an imitation of the antique,

Spanish  
drama.

made to reflect the manners and sentiments of a highly artificial Court, animated by the sympathies of no large national audience, the French playwrights became courtiers, artists obedient to the pleasures of a king—not, like the dramatists of Greece and England, the prophets of the people, the leaders of a chorus triumphant and rejoicing in its mighty deeds.

Italian and  
German  
drama.

Italy has no real theatre. In Italy there has been no stirring of a national, united spirit; no supreme and central audience; no sudden consciousness of innate force and freedom in the sovereign people. The requisite conditions have always failed. The German drama, both by its successes and shortcomings, illustrates the same position. Such greatness as it achieved in Goethe and Schiller it owed to the fermentation of German nationality, to the so-called period of "storm and stress" which electrified the intellects of Germany and made the Germans eager to assert their manhood among nations. But listen to Goethe complaining that there was no public to receive his works; study the petty cabals of Weimar; estimate the imitative and laborious spirit of German art; and it is clear why Germany produced but scattered and imperfect results in the drama.

A national  
audience.

The examples of England, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, all tend to prove that for the creation of a drama it is necessary that the condition of national activity should be combined with the condition of a national audience—not an audience of courtiers, or critics, or learned persons. In Greece, both of these conditions were united in unrivalled and absolute perfection. While in England, during the Elizabethan period, the public which crowded our theatres were uncultivated, and formed but a small portion of the free nation they represented—in Athens the whole people, collectively and in a body, witnessed the dramatic shows provided for them in the theatre of Bacchus. That theatre had space for 30,000 spectators, so that the total male population of Athens could enter it, and at



the same moment attend to the tragedies or comedies of rival playwrights.<sup>1</sup> The same set of men, when assembled in the Pnyx, constituted the national assembly; and in that capacity made laws, voted supplies, declared wars, ratified alliances, ruled the affairs of dependent cities. In a word, they were Athens. Every man among them—by intercourse with the greatest spirits of the Greek world in the Agora and porches of the wrestling-grounds, by contemplation of the sculptures of Pheidias, by familiarity with Eleusinian processions, by participation in solemn sacrifices and choric dances, by listening to the recitations of Homer, by attendance on the lectures of the sophists, by debates in the Ecclesia, by pleadings in the law-courts—had been multifariously educated and rendered capable of appreciating the subtleties of rhetoric and argument, as well as of comprehending the æsthetical beauty with which a Greek play was enriched. It is easy to imagine the influence which this potent, multitudinous, and highly cultivated audience must have exercised over the dramatists, and what an impulse it must have communicated to their genius. In England the playwright and the actor were both looked down upon with pity or contempt; they wrote and acted for money in private speculations, and in rivalry with several petty theatres. In Athens the tragedian was honoured. Sophocles was elected a general with Pericles, and a member of the provisional government after the dissolution of the old democracy. The actor, too, was respected. The State itself defrayed the expenses of the drama, and no ignoble competition was possible between tragedian and tragedian, since all exhibited their plays to the same audience, in the same sacred theatre, and all were judged by the same judges.

Position of  
playwright  
and actor.

The critical condition of the Greek people itself at the epoch of the drama is worth minute consideration. During the two previous centuries, the whole of Hellas had received a long and careful education: at the conclusion came the

<sup>1</sup> See Leake's *Topography of Athens*, vol. i. p. 521.

Greek  
history and  
the drama.

terrible convulsion of the Persian war. After the decay of the old monarchies, the Greek states seethed for years in the process of dissolution and reconstruction. The colonies had been founded. The aristocratic families had striven with the mob in every city; and from one or the other power at times tyrants had risen to control both parties and oppress the commonwealth. Out of these political disturbances there gradually arose a sense of law, a desire for established constitutions. There emerged at last the prospect of political and social stability. Meanwhile, in all departments of art and literature, the Greeks had been developing their genius. Lyrical, satirical, and elegiac poetry had been carried to perfection. The Gnostic poets and the Seven Sages had crystallised morality in apophthegms. Philosophy had taken root in the colonies. Sculpture had almost reached its highest point. The Greek games, practised through nearly three hundred years, had created a sense of national unity. It seemed as if all the acquirements and achievements of the race had been spread abroad to form a solid and substantial base for some most comprehensive superstructure. Then, while Hellas was at this point of magnificent but still incomplete development, there followed, first, the expulsion of the Peisistratids from Athens, which aroused the spirit of that mighty nation, and then the invasion of Xerxes, which electrified the whole Greek world. It was this that inflamed the genius of Greece; this transformed the race of thinkers, poets, artists, statesmen, into a race of heroes, actors in the noblest sense of the word. The struggle with Persia, too, gave to Athens her right place. Assuming the hegemony of Hellas, to which she was foredestined by her spiritual superiority, she flashed in the supreme moment which followed the battle of Salamis into the full consciousness of her own greatness. It was now, when the Persian war had made the Greeks a nation of soldiers, and had placed the crown on Athens, that the drama—that form of art which combines all

kinds of poetry in one, which subordinates sculpture, painting, architecture, music, dancing, to its own use, and renders all arts subservient to the one end of action—appeared in its colossal majesty upon the Attic stage.

At this point of history the drama was a necessary product. The forces which had given birth to all the other forms of art were still exuberant and unexhausted, needing their completion. At the same time, nothing but the impassioned presentation of humanity in action could possibly have satisfied the men who had themselves enacted on the plains and straits of Attica the greatest and most artistic drama of real history. It was one of the chief actors of Marathon and Salamis who composed the *Prometheus*, and personated his own hero on the stage.

Victory over Persia.

If we proceed to analyse the cardinal idea of Greek tragedy, we shall again observe the close connection which exists between the drama and the circumstances of the people at the time of its production. Schlegel, in his *Lectures on the Drama*, defines the prevailing idea of Greek tragedy to be the sense of an oppressive destiny—a fate against which the will of man blindly and vainly dashes. This conception of hereditary destiny seems to be strongly illustrated by many plays. Orestes, Œdipus, Antigone are unable to escape their doom. Beautiful human heroism and exquisite innocence are alike sacrificed to the fatality attending an accursed house. Yet Schlegel has not gone far enough in his analysis. He has not seen that this inflexible fate is set in motion by a superior and anterior power, that it operates in the service of offended justice. When Œdipus slays his father, he does so in contempt of oracular warnings. Orestes, haunted by the Furies, has a mother's blood upon his hands, and unexpiated crimes of father and of grandsire to atone for. Antigone, the best of daughters and most loving of sisters, dies miserably, not dogged by Fate, but having of her own free will exposed her life in obedience to the pure laws of the heart. It is impossible

Schlegel's theory of fate.

Conception  
of Nemesis.

to suppose that a Greek would have been satisfied with the bald fate-theory of Schlegel. Not Fate, but Nemesis, was the ruling notion in Greek tragedy. A profound sense of the Divine government of the world, of a righteous power punishing pride and vice, pursuing the children of the guilty to the tenth generation, but showing mercy to the contrite—in short, a mysterious and almost Jewish ideal of offended Holiness, pervades the whole work of the tragedians. This religious conception had gradually defined itself in the consciousness of the Greek race. Homer in both his epics presents us with the spectacle of crime punished. It is the sin of Paris and the obstinacy of the Trojan princes which lead to the fall of Troy. It is the insolence of the suitors in the *Odyssey* which brings them to their death. The Cyclical poets seem to have dwelt on the same theme. The storm which fell on the Achaian fleet, dispersing or drowning the heroes, was a punishment for their impiety and pride during the sack of Troy. The madness of Ajax followed his violence upon Cassandra. When conscious morality begins in Greece the idea is at once made prominent. Hesiod continually insists on justice, whose law no man may violate unpunished. The Gnostic poets show how guilt, if unavenged at the moment, brings calamity upon the offspring of the evil-doer. This notion of an inheritance of crime is particularly noticeable, since it tinged the whole tragedy of the Greeks. Solon, again, in his dialogue with Croesus, develops another aspect of the same idea. With him the Deity is jealous of all towering greatness, of all insolent prosperity; his Nemesis punishes the pride of wealth and the lust of life. Some of the most prominent personages of Greek tragedy—Creon, Œdipus, Theseus, Agamemnon—illustrate this phase of the idea. In the sayings of the Seven Sages we trace another shade of the conception. All of them insist on moderation, modesty, the right proportion, the due mean. The lyricists take up a somewhat different position. The vicissitudes of life, both independent of and connected with personal guilt,

fascinate their imagination. They have a deep and awful sense of sudden catastrophes. Pindar rises to a loftier level: his odes are pervaded by reverence for a holy Power, before whom the insolent are forced to bow, by whom the humble are protected, and the good rewarded.

Such are the traces of a doctrine of Nemesis to be found in all the literature of the pre-dramatic period. That very event which determined the sudden splendour of the drama, gave a sublime and terrific sanction to the already existing morality. The Persian war exhibited the downfall of a haughty and insolent race, cut off in all its pomp and power. Before the eyes of the men who witnessed the calamities of Œdipus and Agamemnon on the stage, the glory of godless Asia had vanished like a dream. Thus the idea of Nemesis quelling the insolent and smiting the unholy was realised in actual history; and to add to the impression produced on Greek imagination by the destruction of the Persian hosts, Pheidias carved his statue of Nemesis to be a monument in enduring marble of the national morality. Æschylus erected an even more majestic monument to the same principle in his tragedies.<sup>1</sup>

The overthrow of Xerxes.

Nemesis is the fundamental idea of the Greek drama. It appears strongest in Æschylus, as a prophetic and awful law, mysteriously felt and terribly revealed. Sophocles uses it to point the deep moralities which govern human life. In Euripides it degenerates into something more akin to a sense of vicissitudes; it becomes more sentimental—less a religious or moral principle than a phenomenon inspiring fear and pity. This sequence appears to be necessary in the growth and expansion of a primitive idea. Rugged and superstitious at first, it is next harmonised and humanised, and ends at last in being merely artistic.

Transmutation of the idea of Nemesis.

<sup>1</sup> The terrific lessons of the Persian war seem to have quickened in the Greeks a spiritual sense beyond what was natural to their genius, and from the influence of which they speedily recovered.

Æschylean  
doctrine of  
Nemesis.

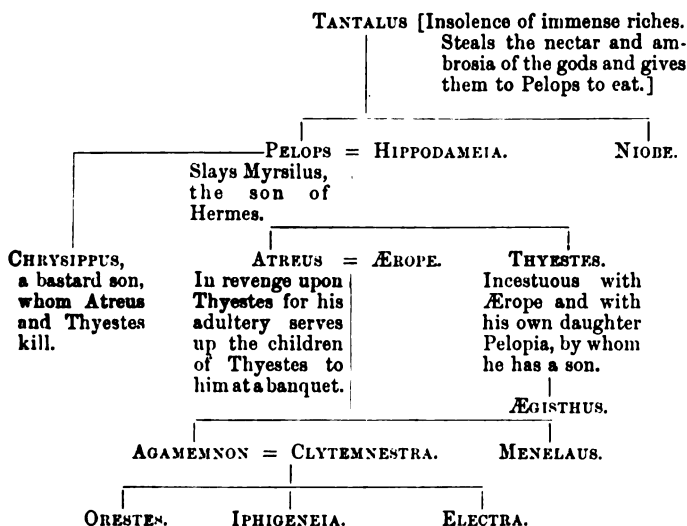
In Æschylus the fundamental moral law of Nemesis, as a part of the Divine government of the world, is set forth in three distinct manifestations. We find it expressed mythologically, as abstract and ideal, in the *Prometheus*. The offence of Prometheus against Zeus, though unselfish and generous, must be expiated by suffering; the rebellious demigod must be brought at last to merge his will in that of Zeus, to bind his brows with the willow of submission, and to place upon his finger the iron ring of necessity. We find it expressed typically, as still ideal and almost superhuman, in the *Oresteia*. Here a whole family is vitiated by the offence of their first ancestor. The hereditary curse is renewed and fortified from generation to generation, by the sins of the children, until at last a reconciliation is effected between the purifying deities and the infernal powers of vengeance. In the *Persæ* the same law is exhibited as a fact of contemporary history. It is no longer a matter of mythology, as in the *Prometheus*, or a matter of heroic legend, as in the *Oresteia*, but a matter of actual experience, that the godless man should suffer and involve the innocent in his disaster. Thus the law of Nemesis is displayed as an eternal verity in the *Prometheus*; and in the *Oresteia* it is actualised and humanised within the region of heroic legend; in the *Persæ* it is used for the explanation of everyday events. The pedigree of inherited crime and vengeance, as explained in the choruses of the *Oresteia*, and as illustrated by the whole history of the Tantalidæ, is this. The pride of wealth in the first instance swells the heart, and inclines its possessor to ungodly thoughts. This leads to impiety (τὸ δυσσεβές), and in the energetic language of the *Agamemnon*<sup>1</sup> the arrogant man kicks with his heel against the altar of Justice. A state of presumptuous insolence (ὑβρις) is the result of the original unholiness. And now the man, who has been corrupted in his soul, is ready for the commission of some signal crime. Até, or a blindness of the reason, which

<sup>1</sup> Line 375; compare *Choëph.* 631, *Eum.* 510-514.

prevents him from foreseeing the consequences of his acts, is the child of this presumption. Inspired by Até, he sheds the blood of his brother, or defiles his sister's bed ;<sup>1</sup> and from this moment the seed is sown, which will spring up and breed fresh mischief for each successive generation. After the spilling of blood the affair passes into the hands of the Erinnyes, whose business it is to beset the house of the guilty doer. They form the bloody revel, which though glutted with gore, refuse to quit the palace of Atreus. They leap upon it from above, and rack it like a tempest. Yet from their power there is escape. The curse of the house works ; but it works only through the impure. Should a man arise capable of seeing rightly and living purely, he may atone the curse and become free. Such a man was Orestes. The leading thought in this system of morality is that pride begets impiety, impiety produces an insolent habit of mind, which culminates in

Até and the  
furies.

<sup>1</sup> This pedigree of the House of Tantalus—a family Upas-tree—illustrates the descent of crime from generation to generation :—



Sophoclean  
doctrine of  
Nemesis.

blindness ; the fruit of this blindness is crime, breeding crime from sire to son. It is only when the righteous man appears, who performs an act of retributive justice, in obedience to divine mandates, and without the indulgence of any selfish passion, that the curse is stayed. Such is a crude sketch of the Æschylean theory of Nemesis, as set forth in the great Trilogy. To Æschylus, the presentation of the moral law conceived by him is of more importance than the exhibition of the characters of men controlled by it. Such is not the case with Sophocles. He fixes our attention upon the *ἀμαρτία*, or error of the guilty man, interests us in the qualities by which he was betrayed into sin, and makes us feel that suffering is the inevitable consequence of arrogant or wilful acts. The weakness of the offender is more prominent in Sophocles than the vengeance of the outraged deity. Thus, although there is the sternest religious background to all the tragedies of Sophocles, our attention is always fixed upon the humanity of his heroes. The house of Labdacus is involved in hereditary guilt. Laius, despising an oracle, begets a son by Jocasta, and is slain by that son. Œdipus, in his youthful recklessness, careless of oracular warnings, kills his father and weds his mother. Jocasta, through her levity and impiety, is hurried into marriage with the murderer of her husband, who is also her own son. All this *αἰθαδία*, or headstrong wilfulness, is punished by the descent of a fearful plague on Thebes ; and Œdipus, whose heat of temper and self-reliance are his only serious crime, is overpowered by the abyss of misery into which these faults have plunged his people and his family. The utter prostration of Œdipus—when his eyes have been opened to the tissue of horrors he has woven round himself, his mother, his nation, and his children—is the first step in his moral discipline. He abdicates in favour of the insolent Creon, and goes forth to wander, an abhorred and helpless blind man, on the face of the earth. When, at the conclusion of his Pariah life, the citizens of Colonus refuse him harbour-



age, he only cries: "My deeds were rather sufferings than crimes." His old heroic haughtiness and headstrong will are tempered to a noble abhorrence of all baseness, to a fiery indignation. He has been purged and lessoned to humility before the throne of Zeus. Therefore, in return for his self-annihilation, the gods at last receive him to their company, and constitute him a blessed Dæmon in the place of his disgrace.<sup>1</sup> It was the highest triumph of tragic art to exhibit that new phase in the character of Œdipus, which marks the conclusion of the *Tyrannus*, and is sustained in the *Coloneüs*. In both of these plays, Œdipus is the same man: but circumstances have so wrought upon his temper as to produce a great change. Still, the change is only commensurate with the force of the circumstances. We comprehend it, while at the same time we are forced to marvel at the profound skill of the poet, who, in the first tragedy, has presented to our eyes the hot-tempered king reduced to abject humiliation, and in

Fate of  
Œdipus.

<sup>1</sup> The text, in this chapter, so far as Æschylus and Sophocles are concerned, repeats what has been already said in the first volume of these Studies. Owing to the way in which they were at first composed, it is impossible to avoid a certain amount of repetition, without a laborious re-casting and re-writing of all the chapters. That would involve a thoroughgoing change of style, and would deprive the work of the one quality it claims—youthfulness. I do not, therefore, think it necessary to excuse myself upon the score of repetitions and anomalies. But I should like to take this opportunity of saying how much I regret that the conditions of life imposed on me by bad health have prevented me from attending any of the representations of Greek plays upon English stages. I feel sure that my criticism of both tragedy and comedy, which rests upon mere study of the texts, would have been essentially modified by witnessing the *Agamemnon*, the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, the *Alceſtis*, the *Birds*, the *Frogs*, as they have, during the last fifteen years or so, been exhibited to English audiences at various centres of learning. To revive the Attic drama is impossible. Yet the acting capabilities of a play can only be tested by dramatic action. I am told by those who saw Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Benson in *Cassandra* and *Clytemnestra*, and by those who listened to the climax of the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, that fresh light was poured for them upon the masterpieces of Æschylus and Sophocles by the human interest evoked in acting.

the second has shown us the same man dignified, and purified by the dealings of the heavy hand of God. Set aside by his calamity, and severed from the common lot of men, Œdipus has submitted to the divine will and has communed with unseen powers. He is therefore now environed with a treble mystery—with the mystery of his awful past,—the mystery of his god-conducted present,—the mystery of his august future. It was by such masterly delineation of character that Sophocles threw the old Æschylean dogma of Nemesis into the background, and moralised his tragedy without sacrificing an iota of its religious force. Aristotle, speaking of the highest tragic art, says that its object is to represent an ἥθος, a permanent habit of moral temper. Careless or bad art allows impossible incongruities in the delineation of character, whereas the true poet maintains identity throughout. If this be so, Sophocles deserves the title of ἠθικώτατος (most masterly in the delineation of human character) in the very highest sense. As a further illustration of the divergence of Sophocles from the Æschylean dogma of Nemesis, it is worth while to mention the *Antigone*. This play takes us beyond the region of hereditary guilt into the sphere of moral casuistry; its tragic interest depends not upon the evolution of an ancestral curse, although Antigone is incidentally involved in the crime of her brothers; but upon the conflict of duties in a single heart. Antigone, while obeying the law of her conscience, is disobeying the command of her sovereign. She acted rightly; yet her offence was sufficient to cause her legal death, and this death she chose with open eyes. It is in the person of Creon that the old moral of Nemesis is drawn. Like Œdipus, he treats the warnings of Teiresias with scorn, and persists in his criminal persecution of the dead Polyneices. Shaken at last by the seer's vaticinations, he rescinds his orders, but too late. Antigone has hanged herself in prison; Hæmon curses his father, and stabs himself upon her corpse; Eurydice, maddened with grief, puts an end to her own life;

The *Antigone* in relation to Nemesis.

and thus the house of the tyrant is left unto him desolate. It is quite impossible by any phrases of mere criticism to express the admiration which every student of Sophocles must feel for the profundity of his design, for the unity of his art, and for the firmness with which he has combined the essential religious doctrines of Greek tragedy with his own ethical philosophy. In passing to Euripides we feel how much we have lost. The religious foundation has been broken up ; the clear intuitive morality of Sophocles has been exchanged for sophistry ; and, as a consequence, his tragedies can never boast of unity beyond the region of æsthetical composition. In the delineation of character he wavers ; not because he could not conceive of a well-sustained type, since Medea, Hippolytus, and many other of his studies have a grand subjective identity ; but because, apparently through levity, he was more interested in the creation of plots and situations than in the exhibition of the truly tragic type of character. The praise bestowed on him by Aristotle proves that his contemporaries had recognised this source of both his weakness and his strength.

Euripidean  
doctrines of  
Nemesis.

In considering the work done by the three great tragic authors, we must not forget that the Greek dramatists adhered to a fixed body of legends ; the tales of the House of Atreus, of Troy, of the family of Laius at Thebes, of Heracles, of Jason, and of Theseus, formed the staple of the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. This fact helps to account for the early decline of the Greek drama. It was impossible for the successors of Æschylus and Sophocles to surpass them in the heroic treatment of the same mythical motives. Yet custom and tradition, the religious antecedents of tragedy, the cumbrous apparatus of mask and buskin and Bacchic robe, the conventional Chorus, the vast size of the theatre, the whole form, in fact, of Greek dramatic art, rendered a transition from the heroic to the romantic tragedy impossible. Those fixed legends which Æschylus had used as the framework for his religious philosophy of Nemesis and

The subject-  
matter of  
the Greek  
drama.

Até, from which Sophocles had drawn deep lessons of morality, had to be employed by Euripides as best he might. On their firmly traced, inflexible outlines he embroidered his own work of pathos and imagination, losing sight of the divine element, blurring morality, but producing a world of fanciful yet living shapes of sentiment and thought and passion.

Rapid development of Attic culture.

In order to comprehend the position of Euripides in relation to his predecessors, we must consider the changes which had taken place in Athens between the period of the Persian war and that in which he flourished. All the mutations of Greek history were accomplished with celerity; but in this space of less than half a century the rate of progress was nothing less than marvellous.<sup>1</sup> Some of the men of Marathon yet remained when Aristophanes was writing, both to point his moral against Euripides, and also to prove by contrast with the

<sup>1</sup> The evolution of the Attic drama through its three great tragedians was accomplished with a rapidity which is quite miraculous. *Æschylus* gained his first prize in 484 B.C., *Sophocles* his first in 468 B.C., *Euripides* his first in 441 B.C. The *Medea* of *Euripides*, a play which exhibits all the innovations of its author, appeared in 431 B.C. Therefore a period of fifty-three years sufficed for the complete development of the greatest work of art the world has ever witnessed. The history of our own stage offers a parallel to this extraordinary rapidity of growth. *Marlowe* produced his *Tamburlaine* in 1590, *Ford* his *Lover's Melancholy* in 1628: between these two dates—that is to say, within the compass of thirty-eight years—were composed all the plays of *Marlowe*, *Shakespeare*, *Ben Jonson*, *Beaumont*, *Fletcher*, *Massinger*, *Webster*, *Heywood*, *Decker*, *Marston*, *Chapman*, *Middleton*, and others whom it would be tedious to mention. *Halliwel's Dictionary of Old English Plays* contains 280 closely-printed pages; yet very few of the pieces he enumerates are subsequent to what we call Elizabethan. But, though our drama, in respect of fertility, offers a parallel to that of Athens, we can show no three poets of paramount genius corresponding to *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*, each of whom would have been sufficient by himself to mark a century in the growth of the genius of his nation. Between *Æschylus* and *Sophocles* there is a wide chasm in religion, politics, and art; between *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, again, there is a chasm in religion, politics, art, and philosophy. Yet *Sophocles*, after superseding *Æschylus*, lived to put on mourning for the death of *Euripides*.

generation that had grown up since, how impossible it was for the poet of the present to vie with the *Æschylus* of the past. In the first place, Athens had become the centre of progressive thought. Teachers of rhetoric and reasoning made her wrestling-grounds and gardens the scene of their disputes and lectures. The arts of eloquence were studied by the youth who in a previous age had been contented with Homer. At Athens, Anaxagoras had questioned the divinity of Helios, and had asserted Reason to be the moving force of the universe. Sophists who taught the arts of life for money, and philosophers who subjected morals to ingenious analysis, while they explained away on scientific principles the ancient myths of Greek nature-worship, combined to disturb ethical and religious traditions. A more solid, because more reasoned, morality was springing up perhaps. A purer monotheism was being inculcated. But meanwhile the old Hellenic customs and the fabric of mythic theology were undermined. It could not be but that the poet of the day should participate in these changes. In the second place, the Athenian populace had grown to be supreme in two departments—the high parliament of State and the law-courts. Every Athenian was now far more than formerly an orator or judge of orators, an advocate or judge of advocates. Two passions possessed the popular mind: the passion for the Assembly with its stormy debate and pompous declamation; the passion for the *Dikastery* with its personal interests, its problems of casuistical law, its momentous tragedies of private life, its studied eloquence. Talking and listening were the double function of an Athenian citizen. To speak well on every subject, so as to gain causes in the courts, and to persuade the people in the *Pnyx*; to criticise speeches with acumen, so as not to be deluded by specious arguments: these were the prime accomplishments of an Athenian youth of promise. It is obvious that a very peculiar audience was thus formed for the tragedian—an audience greedy of in-

Sophistic,  
sceptical,  
forensic  
influences.

tellectual subtleties, of pathetic situations, of splendid oratory, of clever reasoning—an audience more appreciative of the striking than the true, of the novel than the natural. In the third place, the Athenians had waxed delicate and wanton since the Persian war. When Æschylus began to write, the peril of utter ruin hung like a stone of Tantalus over Hellas. That removed, the Greeks breathed freely. The Athenians, growing in wealth and power, neglected the old moderation of their ancestors. Youths who in earlier days would have fared hardly, now drove their chariots, backed their fighting-cocks, and followed their own sweet will. Aristotle quaintly enough observes, that the flute had become fashionable after the expulsion of the Persians. The poet of the day could no longer be austere like Æschylus or sedate like Sophocles. In all these changes Euripides partook. The pupil in rhetoric of Prodicus, in philosophy of Anaxagoras and Heraclitus, a book-collector, a student of painting, the friend of Socrates, cultivated in all innovations of morality and creed, Euripides belonged essentially to his own day. As far as a tragic dramatist can be the mouthpiece of his age, Euripides was the mouthpiece of Athenian decline. For this reason, because he so exactly expressed the feelings and opinions of his time, which feelings and opinions produced a permanent national habit of mind, Euripides became the darling of posterity. Æschylus was the Titanic product of a bygone period; Sophocles displayed the pure and perfect ideal; but Euripides was the artist who, without improving on the spirit of his age, gave it a true and adequate expression. The only wonder is that during his lifetime Euripides was not more popular at Athens. His comparative neglect proved him to have been somewhat in advance of his century, and justifies Aristophanes in the reproach that he anticipated the Athenians in the break-up of their forms of thought.

Euripides,  
the poet of  
his epoch.

At this point we may consider the condition of the Tragic Art when Euripides took it up as the business of his life.

Though tragedy, as formed by Æschylus, represented one true and important aspect of Greek thought—the religious, yet it could never have been adequate to the life of the whole nation in the same degree as the many-sided drama of Shakespeare, for example, was to that of our Elizabethan ancestors. Its regularity and solemnity tended to make it an ideal work of art. It might arouse the religious feeling, the national pride, the enthusiasm for a legendary past, which were so powerful among the Athenians of the Marathonian epoch. But it could not have had much attraction for the Athenians of the Syracusan expedition. As men subject to the divine rule, indeed, it had a message fraught with meaning for them; but as Athenians of to-day it did not touch them. We can well believe that this lofty, ceremonious art fatigued a large portion of the Attic audience. After having listened to some seventy plays of Æschylus and fifty of Sophocles, not to mention Phrynichus and Choerilus, and scores of minor dramatists, all teaching the same religious morality, and all obeying the same æsthetic principles, we can conceive that a merry Greek began to long for novelty. It must have required the supreme genius of a Sophocles to sustain the attention of the audience at its ancient altitude. In the hands of inferior poets, the tragic commonplaces must have appeared insipid. Some change seemed absolutely necessary. Euripides, a poet of very distinguished originality, saw that he must adapt his dramatic style to the new requirements of his audience, and give them what they liked, even though it were not good for them. The sophistic arguments, the strained situations, the law-court pleadings, the pathetic touches, the meretricious lyrics, the philosophical explanations, the sententious epigrams, the theatrical effects, which mar his tragedies, were deliberate innovations on the old pure style. Euripides had determined to bring tragedy home to the sympathies of the spectators. All the peculiarities of his art flow from this one aim. Whether he did not pursue this aim

Changes in  
the tragic  
art.

on a false method, whether he might not have aroused the sympathies of his audience without debasing tragedy, remains a fit matter for debate.

Nemesis and  
the myths as  
handled by  
Euripides.

Entirely to eliminate the idea of Nemesis, which gave its character to Greek tragedy, was what Euripides, had he been so inclined, could hardly have succeeded in effecting. Though he never impresses on our minds the dogma of an avenging deity, like Æschylus, or of an inevitable law, like Sophocles, he makes us feel the chance and change of human life, the helplessness of man, the stormy sea of passions, sorrows, and vicissitudes on which the soul is tossed. Conventional phrases about moderation in all things, retributive justice, and the like, are used to keep up the old tragic form. In this way he brought tragedy down to the level of real life, wherein we do not trace the visible finger of Providence, but where all seems at least confusion to the natural eye. Euripides, no more than Shakespeare, sought to be a prophet or interpreter of the divine operations. In the same spirit he treated his materials with freedom. Adhering conventionally, and as a form of art, to the mythical legends of Hellas—that charmed circle beyond which the tragic muse had never strayed—he adapted them to his own purposes. He gave new characters to the principal heroes,<sup>1</sup> mixed up legendary incidents with trivial domestic scenes, lowered the language of demigods to current Greek talk, hazarded occasional scepticism, and introduced familiar phrases into ceremonious debates. The sacred character of the myths disappeared; Euripides used them as so many masses of entertaining folklore and fiction, fit for tragic handling. When we hear Achilles and Orestes talking like Athenian citizens, wrangling, perorating, subtilising, seeking victory in strife of words, trifling with questions of profoundest import, and settling moral problems by verbal quibbles, we understand the remark of Sophocles that he had painted men as they ought to be, Euripides as they are.

<sup>1</sup> Very notable in this respect is his consistent degradation of Ulysses.



Medea and Alcestis are not the mythical Medea or the legendary queen of Phææ, but an injured wife, and a devoted wife, just such as Shakespeare or Balzac might have depicted. But unfortunately for this attempt to make Greek tragedy more real and living, more representative of the actual world, the cothurnus, the mask, the Chorus, the thymelé, the gigantic stage, remained. All the cumbrous paraphernalia of the Æschylean theatre environed the men and women of Euripides, who cut but a poor figure in the garb of demigods. In trying to adapt the mould of Greek tragedy to real life, Euripides overpassed the limits of possibility. The mould snapped in his hands. Therefore he is better to read than he could have been in scenic representation.

The same inevitable divergence from the Æschylean system is observable in every department of the tragedy of Euripides. While Sophocles had diminished the direct interposition of mysterious agencies, so frequently invoked by Æschylus, and had interested his audience in human character controlled and tempered by an unseen will of God, Euripides went further. With him the affairs of life are no longer based upon a firm foundation of Divine law, but gods intervene mechanically and freakishly, like the magicians in Ariosto or Tasso.<sup>1</sup> Their agency is valuable, not as determining the moral conduct of the personages, but as an exhibition of supernatural power which brings about a sudden revolution of events. Independently of their miraculous activity, the human agents display all varieties of character: every shade of virtue and vice is delicately portrayed; pathetic scenes are multiplied; the tendernesses of domestic life are brought prominently forward; mixed motives and conflicting passions are skilfully analysed. Consequently the plays of Euripides are more rich in stirring incidents than those of his pre-

His naturalism.

His treatment of the gods

<sup>1</sup> Exception must be made in favour of the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchæ*, where the whole action, of the play and the conduct of the persons are determined by the influences of Aphrodite and Dionysus.

decessors. What we lose in gravity and unity is made up for by versatility. Euripides, to use a modern phrase, is more sensational than either Æschylus or Sophocles. Aristotle called him *τραγικώτατος* (consummate in tragic effects), by which he probably meant that he was most profuse of touching and exciting scenes.

Sensational  
dramatic  
effects.

The same tendencies strike us in the more formal department of the tragic art. Here as elsewhere Euripides moves a step beyond Sophocles, breaking the perfection of poetic harmony for the sake of novelty and effect. Euripides condescended to stage tricks. It is well known how Aristophanes laughed at him for the presentation of shabby-genteel princes and monarchs out-at-elbow. Having no deep tragic destiny for the groundwork of his drama, he sought to touch the spectators by royalty in ruins and wealth reduced to beggary. The gorgeous scenic shows in which Æschylus had delighted, but which he had invariably subordinated to his subject, and which Sophocles with the tact of a supreme master in beauty had managed to dispense with, were lavished by Euripides. One play of his, the *Troades*, has absolutely no plot. Such attraction as it possesses, it owes to the rapid succession of pathetic situations and splendid scenes, the whole closing with the burning of the towers of Troy.

The Chorus  
and the  
Messenger.

By curtailing the function of the Chorus, Euripides separated from the action of the drama that element which in Æschylus had been chiefly useful for the inculcation of the moral of the play. On the other hand, by expanding the function of the Messenger he was able to indulge his faculty for brilliant description. It has been well said, that the ear and not the eye was the chosen vehicle of pathos to the Greeks. This remark is fully justified by the narrative passages in the plays of Euripides—passages of poetry unsurpassed for radiance, swiftness, strength, pictorial effect. The account of the Bacchic revels among the mountains of Cithæron, and of the death of Pentheus in the *Bacchæ*, that

of the death of Glauké in *Medea*, and of Hippolytus in the play that bears his name, that of the sacrifice of Polyxena in the *Hecuba*, and many others, prove with what consummate skill the third of the great tragic poets seized upon a field within the legitimate province of his art, as yet but imperfectly occupied by his predecessors.

Another novelty was the use of the prologue. Here, again, Euripides expanded the already existing elements in Greek tragedy beyond their power of enduring the strain he put upon them. In their drama the Greek poets did not aim at surprise; the spectators were expected to be familiar beforehand with the subject of the play. But when the plot became more complicated, and the incidents more varied under the hands of Euripides, a prologue was the natural expedient, in perfect harmony with the stationary character of Greek tragedy, for placing the audience at the point of view intended by the poets.

The pro-  
logue.

In all these changes it will be evident that Euripides, wisely or unwisely, obtained originality by carrying his art beyond the point which it had reached under his predecessors. Using a simile, we might compare the drama of Æschylus to the sublime but rugged architecture which is called Norman, that of Sophocles to the most refined and perfect pointed style, that of Euripides to a highly decorated—florid and flamboyant—manner. Æschylus aimed at durability of structure, at singleness and grandeur of effect. Sophocles added the utmost elegance and finish. Euripides neglected force of construction and unity of design for ornament and brilliancy of effect. But he added something of his own, something infinitely precious and enduringly attractive. The fault of his style consisted in a too exclusive attention to the parts.

The three  
tragic poets.

The object of the foregoing remarks has been to show how and to what extent Euripides departed from the form and essence of Greek tragedy. It may sound paradoxical now to

Evolution-  
ary prin-  
ciples ap-  
plied to art.

assert that it was a merit in him rather than a defect to have sacrificed the unity of art to the development of subordinate beauties. Yet it seems to me that in no other way could the successor of Æschylus and Sophocles have made himself the true exponent of his age, have expanded to the full the faculties still latent in Greek tragedy, or have failed to "affect the fame of an imitator." The law of inevitable progression in art, from the severe and animated embodiment of an idea to the conscious elaboration of merely æsthetic motives and brilliant episodes, has hitherto been neglected by the critics and historians of poetry. They do not observe that the first impulse in a people toward creativeness is some deep and serious emotion, some fixed point of religious enthusiasm or national pride. To give adequate form to this taxes the energies of the first generation of artists, and raises their poetic faculty, by the admixture of prophetic inspiration, to the highest pitch. After the original passion for the ideas to be embodied in art has somewhat subsided, but before the glow and fire of enthusiasm have faded out, there comes a second period, when art is studied more for art's sake, but when the generative potency of the earlier poets is by no means exhausted. For a moment the artist at this juncture is priest, prophet, hierophant, and charmer, all in one. More conscious of the laws of beauty than his predecessors, he makes some sacrifice of the idea to meet the requirements of pure art; but he never forgets that beauty by itself is insufficient to a great and perfect work, nor has he lost his interest in the cardinal conceptions which vitalise the most majestic poetry. During the first and second phases which I have indicated, the genius of a nation throws out a number of masterpieces—some of them rough-hewn and Cyclopean, others perfect in their combination of the strength of thought with grace and elevated beauty. But the mine of ideas is exhausted. The national taste has been educated. Conceptions which were novel to the grandparents have become the

intellectual atmosphere of the grandchildren. It is now impossible to return upon the past—to gild the refined gold, or to paint the lily of the supreme poets. Their vigour may survive in their successors: but their inspiration has taken form for ever in their poems. What then remains for the third generation of artists? They have either to reproduce their models—and this is stifling to true genius; or they have to seek novelty at the risk of impairing the strength or the beauty which has become stereotyped. Less deeply interested in the great ideas by which they have been educated, and of which they are in no sense the creators, incapable of competing on the old ground with their elders, they are obliged to go afield for striking situations, to force sentiment and pathos, to subordinate the harmony of the whole to the melody of the parts, to sink the prophet in the poet, the hierophant in the charmer.

This law of sequence is widely applicable. It will be seen to control the history of all uninterrupted artistic dynasties. Greek sculpture, for example, passes from the austere, through the perfect, to the simply elegant. The artist of the Æginetan pediment was wholly intent upon the faithful representation of heroic incidents. The event filled his mind: he sought to express it as energetically as he could. Pheidias stands on the ground of accomplished art. The *Mythus* selected for treatment is developed with perfect fidelity, but also with regard to æsthetical effect. Praxiteles neglects the event, the substance of the *Mythus*. His interest in that has languished, and has been supplanted by enthusiasm for mere forms of beauty. He lavishes a Pheidian wealth of genius on separate figures and situations of no great import except for their consummate loveliness. In architecture, the genealogy of the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders points to the same law. Take another instance from modern painting. Giotto, Raphael, Correggio, differ less perhaps in actual calibre than in relative historical position. Giotto, intent upon the fundamental

Example  
from Greek  
sculpture.

Example  
from Italian  
painting.

ideas of Christian mythology, determines to express them forcibly, faithfully, earnestly, without regarding aught but the best method of investing them with harmony, lucidity, and dignity. Raphael ascends a step, and combines the strength and purity of Giotto with elaborate beauty and classic finish of style. Correggio at his appearance finds all the great work done. The Christian mythos has been adequately set forth by his predecessors. He is driven to become the thaumaturgist of chiaroscuro, the audacious violator of unity in composition, the supreme painter of erotic paradise. Further development of the religious idea beyond that achieved by Raphael was impossible. Already in Raphael's work a compromise between religious austerity and pagan grace had been observable. The simplicity of Giotto was gone beyond recapture. Correggio could only be original by carrying onward to its ultimate perfection the element of beauty for its own sake introduced by Raphael. Like Euripides, Correggio was condemned to the misfortune of separating beauty from the idea, the body from the spirit. With them the forces inherent in the germs of their respective arts were exhausted. But those who rightly understand them must, we imagine, be prepared to accept with gratitude the existence of Correggio and Euripides, both as complementing Giotto and Æschylus, and also as accounting for the meridian splendour of Sophocles and Raphael. Without the cadence of Euripides the majestic aria of Sophocles would hardly be played out. By studying the Correggiosity of Correggio we comprehend how much of mere æsthetic beauty is held in solution in the work of Raphael. It is thus, as it were, that, like projectiles, arts describe their parabolas and end.

To return in detail to the Greek tragedians. Æschylus determines at all hazards to exhibit the chosen mythos in its entirety, and to give full prominence to his religious idea. Hence we have to put up with much that is tedious—

a whole *Choëphoræ*, for example. But hence the unrivalled majesty of the *Agamemnon*. Sophocles manipulates his subject more artistically, so as to make it harmonious without losing sight of its internal source of unity. But he already begins to disintegrate the colossal work of Æschylus—notably in his separation of the Trilogy and in this moralising of the idea of Nemesis. With Euripides the disintegration is complete. He neglects the mythus altogether. The theosophy of Æschylus, always implicit in Sophocles, survives as a mere conventionality in the work of Euripides. Finally, like Praxiteles, he carves single statues of eminent beauty; like Correggio, he conceals his poverty of design beneath a mass of redundant elegance. What we have really to regret in the art of Euripides is that he should have endeavoured to compete at all with Æschylus and Sophocles upon the old ground of the tales of Thebes and Troy. Where he breaks new ground, as in the *Medea*, the *Hippolytus*, and the *Bacchæ*, he proves himself a consummate master. Here the novelty of his method shocks no sense of traditional propriety. He is not driven to flippant scepticism in dealing with time-honoured myths, or to travesties of well-marked characters, in order to assert his individuality. These plays exhibit a complete unity of outward form, and a profound internal unity of passion and character. They are not surpassed in their own kind by anything that any other poet had produced; and if “the *chef d’œuvre* be adequate to the *chef d’œuvre*,” Euripides may here be pronounced the equal of Sophocles and Shakespeare.

Application  
to Greek  
tragedy.

To enter into an elaborate analysis of Euripides as a poet would be beyond the scope of this chapter, which has for its subject the relation of the third great dramatist to his predecessors and to Greek tragedy in general. Yet something must be added to justify the opinion just expressed, that, though Euripides suffered by the constraint under which he laboured in competition with rivals who had nearly exhausted

Euripides as  
poet and  
painter.

the resources of the tragic art, yet he displays beauties of his own of such transcendent merit as to place him in the first rank of the poets of the world. It would be a delightful task to attempt to do him justice in the teeth of a malevolent generation of critics, led by Schlegel and Müller, who do not understand him—to summon from the shadows of the Attic stage the “magnificent witch” Medea, pure-souled Polyxena, wifely Alcestis, fiery-hearted Phædra, chaste and cold Hippolytus, Andromache upon her chariot a royal slave, Orestes in his agony soothed by a sister’s ministrations, the sunny piety of Ion, the self-devotion of Menoikeus—intermingling perchance these pictured forms, pure, statuesque and clear as frescoes from Pompeii, with choric odes and exquisite descriptions. The lyrics of Euripides are among the choicest treasures of Greek poetry: they flow like mountain rivulets, flashing with sunbeams, eddying in cool shady places, rustling through leaves of mint, forget-me-not, marsh-marigold, and dock. His landscapes are most vivid: in ancient poetry there is nothing to compete with the pictures of Cithæron, where the Bacchantes lie limb-length beneath the silver-firs, their snakes asleep, and the mountain air ruffling their loose curls; or with the cave of Polyphemus, where the satyrs lead their flocks from pasture up the valley between stone-pine and chestnut-tree to the lawns that overhang dark purple sea-waves. In the department of the picturesque Euripides is unrivalled. His paintings have the truth to nature, the delicately modulated outline, and the facile grace of the most perfect bas-reliefs or frescoes.

His ethical  
ideal.

But to attempt this labour of criticism would be to write a book upon Euripides. It must be enough in this place to illustrate one quality which occupies a large space in the dramatic ethics of Euripides, and forms the motive of the action of his leading characters. The old religious basis of Nemesis having been virtually abandoned by him, Euripides fell back upon the morality of passions and emotions. For



his cardinal virtue he chose what the Greeks called *εὐψυχία*, The virtue of fortitude. (stout-heartedness), pluck in the noblest sense of the word,—that temper of the soul which prepared the individual to sacrifice himself for the State, and to triumph in pain or death or dogged endurance rather than give way to feebler instincts. That this quality should be prominent in Euripides is not without significance. Not only did it enable him to construct most thrilling scenes: it also harmonised with the advancing tendencies of Greek philosophy, which already held within itself the germs of Stoicism—or the theory of *καρτερία* (steadfast endurance).<sup>1</sup> One of the most dramatic exhibitions of this virtue occurs in the *Phœnissæ*. The Seven Captains are beleaguering Thebes, and affairs are going ill with the garrison. Teiresias, however, prophesies that if Creon's son, Menoikeus, will kill himself, Thebes must triumph. Creon accepts the prophecy but seeks to save his son; he sends for Menoikeus and instructs him how he may escape to Dodona. Menoikeus pretends to agree with Menoikeus. what his father counsels, and, after true Euripidean fashion, sends Creon to get his journey-money. Then the boy, left alone upon the stage, turns to the Chorus and begins his speech:—

“How well have I my father's fears allayed  
 With fraudulent words to compass my own will!  
 Lo, he would filch me hence, with shame to me,  
 Loss to my fatherland. An old man's heart  
 Deserves some pity.—What pity can I claim  
 If I betray the land that gave me birth?  
 Know then that I shall go and save the state,  
 Giving my life and dying for this land.

---

<sup>1</sup> It may be questioned whether a Dorian type of character was not in the mind of Euripides when he constructed his ideal of feminine heroism. What Plutarch in the life of Cleomenes says of Cratesiclea and the wife of Panteus reads like a commentary on the tragedies of *Macaria*, *Polyxena*, and *Iphigeneia*. Xenophon's partiality for the Spartans indicates the same current of sympathy. Philosophical analysis was leading up to an eclectic Hellenism.

For this is shameful ; if beneath no ban  
 Of oracles, bound by no force of fate,  
 But standing to their shields, men dare to die  
 Under the ramparts of the town they love ;  
 While I, untrue to brother and to sire,  
 And to my country, like a felon slink  
 Far hence in exile ! Lo, where'er I roam  
 All men would call me coward ! By great Zeus,  
 Who dwells among the stars, by bloody Ares,  
 Who made the dragon-seed in days of old  
 Lords of the land, I swear this shall not be !  
 But I will go, and on the topmost towers,  
 Standing, will dash into the murky den  
 Where couched the dragon, as the prophet bade.  
 Thus will I free my country. I have spoken.  
 See, then, I leave you : it is no mean gift  
 In death I give the city ; but my land  
 I purge of sickness. If all men were bold  
 Of their good things to work the public weal,  
 I ween our towns had less of ills to suffer,  
 And more of blessings for all days to be."

*Phœn.* 991-1018.

Deaths of  
 Eteocles,  
 Polyneices,  
 Jocasta.

With the *Phœnissæ* in our hands, one other passage may be translated which displays the power possessed by Euripides of composing a dramatic picture, and presenting pathos to the eye. Eteocles and Polyneices have been wounded to the death. Jocasta, their mother, and Antigone, their sister, go forth to the battlefield to find them :—

"Then rushed their wretched mother on the twain  
 And seeing them thus wounded unto death,  
 Wailed : 'O, my sons ! too late, too late I come  
 To succour you !' Then, clasping them by turns,  
 She wept and mourned the long toil of her breasts,  
 Groaning ; and by her side their sister groaned :  
 'O, ye who should have been my mother's stay  
 In age, O, thoughtless of my maiden years  
 Unwedded, dearest brothers !' From his chest  
 Heaving a heavy breath, King Eteocles heard  
 His mother, and stretched forth a cold damp hand  
 On hers, and nothing said, but with his eyes

Spake to her by his tears, showing kind thoughts  
 In symbols. Then the other, who still breathed,  
 Looked at his sister, and the queen, and said,  
 'We have perished, mother! yea, I pity thee,  
 And this my sister, and my brother dead;  
 For dear he was—my foe—and yet was dear.  
 Bury me, O, my mother, and thou, too,  
 Sweet sister, in my father's land, I pray;  
 And close my dying eyelids with thy hand,  
 Mother!'—Upon his eyes he placed her hand—  
 'And fare you well! Now darkness clips me round.'  
 Then both breathed out their weary life together.  
 But the queen, when she saw this direful end,  
 Maddened with anguish drew the dead man's sword,  
 And wrought things horrible; for through her throat  
 She thrust the blade: and on her dearest falling  
 Dies, and lies stretched, clasping both in her arms."

*Phœn.* 1429-1454.

But to return to the virtue of high spirit and stout-heartedness. The play of *Hecuba* contains a still more touching picture of heroism in death than that displayed by Menoikeus. Troy has been taken. Odysseus is sent by the Greeks to inform Hecuba that her daughter Polyxena must be sacrificed. Hecuba reminds him how in former days he had come disguised as a spy to Troy, and how she had recognised him, and, at his strong entreaty, spared him from discovery. In return for this, let him now spare her daughter. Frigidly and politely Odysseus replies, "True, lady, a life for life. You saved mine, I would do something to save yours; but your daughter is quite another person. I have not the pleasure of having received benefits from her. I must trouble her to follow me." Then Polyxena breaks silence:—

Hecuba  
 pleads for  
 Polyxena.

"I see thee, how beneath thy robe, O king,  
 Thy hand is hidden, thy face turned from mine,  
 Lest I should touch thee by the beard and pray.  
 Fear not: thou hast escaped the god of prayers  
 For my part. I will rise and follow thee,  
 Driven by strong need; yea, and not loth to die.  
 Lo! if I should not seek death, I were found

A cowardly, life-loving, selfish soul !  
 For why should I live ? Was my sire not king  
 Of all broad Phrygia ? Thus my life began ;  
 Then was I nurtured on fair bloom of hope  
 To be the bride of kings ; no small the suit,  
 I ween, of lovers seeking me : thus I  
 Was once—ah, woe is me ! of Idan dames  
 Mistress and queen, 'mid maidens like a star  
 Conspicuous, peer of gods, except for death ;  
 And now I am a slave : this name alone  
 Makes me in love with death—so strange it is”

*Hec.* 342-358.

*The sacrifice  
 of Polyxena.*

Sheer contempt of life, when life has to be accepted on dishonourable terms, is the virtue of Polyxena. But, so far, though we may admire her fortitude, we have not been touched by her misfortune. Euripides reserves the pathos, after his own fashion, for a picture. Talthybius, the herald, is telling Hecuba how her daughter died :—

“The whole vast concourse of the Achaian host  
 Stood round the tomb to see your daughter die.  
 Achilles' son, taking her by the hand,  
 Placed her upon the mound, and I stayed near ;  
 And youths, the flower of Greece, a chosen few,  
 With hands to check thy heifer, should she bound,  
 Attended. From a cup of carven gold,  
 Raised full of wine, Achilles' son poured forth  
 Libation to his sire, and bade me sound  
 Silence throughout the whole Achaian host.  
 I, standing there, cried in the midst these words :  
 ‘Silence, Achaians ! let the host be still !  
 Hush, hold your voices !’ Breathless stayed the crowd ;  
 But he : ‘O, son of Peleus, father mine,  
 Take these libations pleasant to thy soul,  
 Draughts that allure the dead : come, drink the black  
 Pure maiden's blood wherewith the host and I  
 Sue thee : be kindly to us ; loose our prow,  
 And let our barks go free ; give safe return  
 Homeward from Troy to all, and happy voyage.’  
 Such words he spake, and the crowd prayed assent.  
 Then from the scabbard, by its golden hilt,  
 He drew the sword, and to the chosen youths

Signalled that they should bring the maid ; but she,  
 Knowing her hour was come, spake thus, and said :  
 ' O, men of Argos who have sacked my town,  
 Lo, of free will I die ! let no man touch  
 My body : boldly will I stretch my throat.  
 Nay, but I pray you set me free, then slay ;  
 That free I thus may perish : 'mong the dead,  
 Being a queen, I blush to be called slave.'  
 The people shouted, and King Agamemnon  
 Bade the youths loose the maid, and set her free :  
 She, when she heard the order of the chiefs,  
 Seizing her mantle, from the shoulder down  
 To the soft centre of her snowy waist  
 Tore it, and showed her breasts and bosom fair  
 As in a statue. Bending then with knee  
 On earth, she spake a speech most piteous :  
 ' See you this breast, oh ! youth, if breast you will,  
 Strike it ; take heart : or if beneath my neck,  
 Lo ! here my throat is ready for your sword !'  
 He willing not, yet willing, pity-stirred  
 In sorrow for the maiden, with his blade  
 Severed the channels of her breath : blood flowed ;  
 And she, though dying, still had thought to fall  
 In seemly wise hiding what eyes should see not.  
 But when she breathed her life out from the blow,  
 Then was the Argive host in divers way  
 Of service parted ; for some bringing leaves,  
 Strewed them upon the corpse ; some piled a pyre,  
 Dragging pine trunks and boughs ; and he who bore none,  
 Heard from the bearers many a bitter word :  
 ' Standest thou, villain ? Hast thou then no robe,  
 No funeral honours for the maid to bring ?  
 Wilt thou not go and get for her who died  
 Most nobly, bravest-souled, some gift ?' Thus they  
 Spake of thy child in death : O, thou most blessed  
 Of women in thy daughter, most undone !"

*Hec.* 521-582.

The quality of high spirit which we have seen in Menoikeus and Polyxena, is displayed by Macaria in the *Heracleidæ* and by Iphigeneia in the last scene of her tragedy at Aulis. Another shade of the same virtue gives a peculiar attraction to the

Macaria and  
Iphigeneia.

**Alcestis and Electra.** self-devotion of Alcestis in her death, and of Electra in her attendance on the brain-sick Orestes. It is noticeable that Euripides, the so-called woman-hater, has alone of the Greek poets subsequent to Homer, with the single exception of Sophocles, devoted his genius to the delineation of female characters. It is impossible to weigh occasional sententious sarcasms against such careful studies of heroic virtue in woman as the Iphigeneia, the Electra, the Polyxena, the Alcestis of our poet. Aristophanes, who was himself the worst enemy Athenian ladies ever met with, describes Euripides as a foe to women, apparently because he thought fit to treat them, not as automata, but as active, passionate, and powerful agents in the play of human life.<sup>1</sup>

**The story of Medea.**

But to return to our illustrations of this high-spirited, stout-hearted, quality of soul. In the *Medea* and the *Hippolytus* Euripides again displays the virtue of stern Stoicism in two women. But here the heroines are guilty: their Spartan endurance of anguish to the death is tempered with crime. These tragedies are the masterpieces of the poet; in each of them the single passion of an individual forms the subject of the drama. Separated from all antecedents of ancestral doom, Medea and Phædra work out the dreadful consequences of their own tempestuous will. Not *Othello*, and not *Faust*, have a more complete internal unity of motive. No modern play has an equal external harmony of form. Medea was one of the most romantic figures of Greek story. Daughter of the sungod in the Colchian land of mystery and magic, she unfolded like some poisonous flower, gorgeous to look upon, with flaunting petals and intoxicating scent, but deadly. Terrible indeed in wiles, she learned to love Jason. By a series of crimes, in which the hero participated as her accomplice, and of which he reaped the benefits—by the betrayal of her father's trust, by

<sup>1</sup> The real cause of offence was the prominence given by Euripides to the passion of unholy love in some of his heroines; to the interest and sympathy he created for Phædra, Sthenobœa, and others.

the murder of her brother, by the butchery of Pelias—she placed her lover on the throne of Thessaly. Then Jason, at the height of his prosperity, forgetting the love, as of some tigress, that the sorceress bore him, forgetting too her fatal power of life and death, cast his eyes on Glauké, the king's daughter of Corinth, and bade Medea go forth with her sons, a Pariah,—a dishonoured wife. Whither should she turn? To Colchis, and the father whose son she slew? To Thessaly, where the friends of Pelias still live? Jason does not care. His passion for Medea has vanished like a mist. Their common trials, common crimes—trials which should have endeared them to each other; crimes which were as strong as hell to bind them—have melted from his mind like dew. He only wishes to be rid of the fell woman, and to live a peaceful life with innocent home-keeping folk. But on one thing Jason has not reckoned—on the awful fury of his old love; he forgets how she wrought by magic and by poison in his need, and how in her own need she may do things terrible and strange. In the same way we often think that we will lightly leave some ancient, strong, habitual sin, of old time passionately cherished, of late grown burdensome; but not so easily may the new pure life be won. Between our souls and it there stands the fury of the past.

Medea in her house, like a lioness in her den, has crouched sleepless, without food, not to be touched or spoken to, since the first news of Glauké's projected bridal was told. No one knows what she is meditating. Only the nurse of her children mistrusts her fiery eyes and thunderous silence, her viperish loose hair and throbbing skin. The moment is finely prepared. Some Corinthian ladies visit her, and she, though loth to rise, does so at their prayer, excusing her reluctance by illness, and by a foreigner's want of familiarity with their customs. Pale, calm, and terrible, she stands before them. From this first appearance of Medea to the end of the play, her one figure occupies the whole space of the theatre. Her spirit is in the

The  
vengeance  
of Medea.

air, and the progress of the action only dilates the impression which she has produced. The altercations with Creon and with Jason are artfully conducted so as to arouse our sympathy and make us feel that such a nature is being driven by the intemperance and selfishness of others into a *cul-de-sac* of crime. The facility with which she disposes in thought of her chief foes, as if they were so many flies that have to be caught and killed, is eminently impressive. "Many are the ways of death : I will stretch three corpses in the palace—Creon's, the bride's, my husband's. My only thought is now of means—whether to burn them, or to cut their throats—perchance the old tried way of poison were the best. Nay, they are dead" (*Kal dh̄ tethvāsi*). Medea knows *they* cannot escape her. For the rest, she will consider her own plans. In the scene with Jason she rises to an appalling altitude. Her words are winged snakes and the breath of furnaces. There is no querulous recrimination, no impotence of anger ; but her spirit glows and flickers dragon-like against him, as she stands above him on the pedestal of his ingratitude. But when he has gone, and she sits down to reconsider her last act of vengeance—the murder of his sons and hers—then begins the tragic agony of her own soul. These lines reveal the contest between a mother's love and the pride of an injured woman, the endurance of one who must steel her heart in order to preserve her fame for fortitude and power :—

The murder  
of her  
children.

"O Zeus, and justice of high Jove, and light  
Of Sun, all seeing ! Now victorious  
Over my foes shall I pace forth, sweet friends,  
To triumph !

"I shudder at the deed that will be done  
Hereafter : for my children I shall slay—  
Mine ; there is none shall snatch them from me now.

"Let no one deem me timid, weak of hand,  
Placidly tame ; but of the other temper,  
Harsh to my foes and kindly to my friends."

Then when Glauké, arrayed in the robe Medea sent her, is smouldering to ashes with her father in slow phosphorescent



flame, Medea sends for her children and makes that last speech which is the very triumph of Euripidean rhetoric :—

Medea's last  
speech.

“O, children, children ! you have still a city,  
A home, where, lost to me and all my woe,  
You will live out your lives without a mother !  
But I—lo ! I am for another land,  
Leaving the joy of you :—to see you happy,  
To deck your marriage-bed, to greet your bride,  
To light your wedding torch shall not be mine !  
O me, thrice wretched in my own self-will !  
In vain then, dear my children ! did I rear you ;  
In vain I travailed, and with wearing sorrow  
Bore bitter anguish in the hour of childbirth !  
Yea, of a sooth, I had great hope of you,  
That you should cherish my old age, and deck  
My corpse with loving hands, and make me blessed  
’Mid women in my death. But now, ah me !  
Hath perished that sweet dream. For long without you  
I shall drag out a dreary doleful age.  
And you shall never see your mother more  
With your dear eyes : for all your life is changed.  
Woe, woe !  
Why gaze you at me with your eyes, my children ?  
Why smile your last sweet smile ? Ah ! me ; ah ! me !  
What shall I do ? My heart dissolves within me,  
Friends, when I see the glad eyes of my sons !  
I cannot. No : my will that was so steady,  
Farewell to it. They too shall go with me :  
Why should I wound their sire with what wounds them,  
Heaping tenfold his woes on my own head ?  
No, no, I shall not. Perish my proud will.  
Yet whence this weakness ? Do I wish to reap  
The scorn that springs from enemies unpunished ?  
Dare it I must. What craven fool am I,  
To let soft thoughts flow trickling from my soul !  
Go, boys, into the house : and he who may not  
Be present at my solemn sacrifice—  
Let him see to it. My hand shall not falter.  
Ah ! ah !  
Nay, do not, O my heart ! do not this thing !  
Suffer them, O poor fool ; yea, spare thy children !  
There in thy exile they will gladden thee.

Not so : by all the plagues of nethermost Hell  
 It shall not be that I, that I should suffer  
 My foes to triumph and insult my sons !  
 Die must they : this must be, and since it must,  
 I, I myself will slay them, I who bore them.  
 So it is fixed, and there is no escape.  
 Even as I speak, the crown is on her head,  
 The bride is dying in her robes, I know it.  
 But since this path most piteous I tread,  
 Sending them forth on paths more piteous far,  
 I will embrace my children. O, my sons,  
 Give, give your mother your dear hands to kiss !  
 O, dearest hands, and mouths most dear to me,  
 And forms and noble faces of my sons !  
 Be happy even there : what here was yours,  
 Your father robs you of. O, loved embrace !  
 O, tender touch and sweet breath of my boys !  
 Go, go, go, leave me ! Lo, I cannot bear  
 To look on you : my woes have overwhelmed me !  
 Now know I all the ill I have to do :  
 But rage is stronger than my better mind,  
 Rage, cause of greatest crimes and griefs to mortals."<sup>1</sup>  
*Med.* 1021-1080.

*Phædra.* Phædra, the heroine of the *Hippolytus*, supplies us with a new conception of the same thirst for *εὐκλεία* (glory and fair fame)—the same *εὐψυχία* (high spirit), *γενναϊότης* (noble pluck), indifference to life when honour is at stake. The pride of her good name drives Phædra to a crime more detestable than Medea's, because her victim Hippolytus is eminently innocent. I do not want to dwell upon the pining sickness of Phædra, which Euripides has wrought with exquisitely painful details, but rather to call attention to Hippolytus. Side by side with the fever of Phædra is the pure fresh health of the hunter-hero. The scent of forest-glades, where he pursues the deer with Artemis, surrounds him ; the sea-breeze from the sands, where he trains his horses, moves his curls. His piety

<sup>1</sup> The whole of this splendid speech should be compared with the fragment of Neophron's *Medea*, on which it is obviously modelled. See chapter xvi. on Fragments of the Lost Tragic Poets.

is as untainted as his purity; it is the maiden-service of a maiden-saint. In his observance of the oath extorted from him by Phædra's nurse, in his obedience to his father's will, in his kindness to his servants, in his gentle endurance of a painful death, and in the joy with which he greets the virgin huntress when she comes to visit him, Euripides has firmly traced the ideal of a guileless, tranquil manhood. Hippolytus among the ancients was the Paladin of chastity, the Percival of their romance. Nor is any knight of mediæval legend more true and pure than he. Hippolytus first comes upon the stage with a garland of wild flowers for Artemis:—

Hippolytus,  
the knight  
of Artemis.

“Lady, for thee this garland have I woven  
Of wilding flowers plucked from an unshorn meadow,  
Where neither shepherd dares to feed his flock,  
Nor ever scythe hath swept, but through the mead  
Unshorn in spring the bee pursues her labours,  
And maiden modesty with running rills  
Waters the garden. Sweet queen, take my crown  
To deck thy golden hair: my hand is holy.  
To me alone of men belongs this honour,  
To be with thee and answer when thou speakest;  
Yea, for I hear thy voice but do not see thee.  
So may I end my life as I began.”

Even in this bald translation some of the fresh morning feeling, as of cool fields and living waters, and pure companionship and a heart at peace, transpires. Throughout the play, in spite of the usual Euripidean blemishes of smart logic-chopping and pragmatism, this impression is maintained. Hippolytus moves through it with the athletic charm that belongs to such statues as that of Meleager and his dog in the Vatican. At the end the young hero is carried from the sea-beach, mangled, and panting out his life amid intolerable pain and fever-thirst. His lamentations are loud and deep as he calls on Death the healer. Then suddenly is he aware of the presence of Artemis:—

"O, breath and perfume of the goddess ! Lo,  
I feel thee even in torment, and am eased !  
Here in this place is Artemis the queen."

The death of  
Hippolytus.

The scent of the forest coolness has been blown upon him.  
His death will now be calm.

A. Poor man ! she is ; the goddess thou most loved.  
H. Seest thou me, lady, in what plight I lie ?  
A. I see thee ; but I may not drop a tear.  
H. Thou hast no huntsman and no servant now.  
A. Nay, truly, since thou diest, dear my friend.  
H. No groom, no guardian of thy sculptured shrine.  
A. 'Twas Kupris, the arch-fiend, who wrought this woe.  
H. Ah, me ! Now know I what god made me die.  
A. Shorn of her honour, vexed with thy chaste life.  
H. Three of us her one spite—behold ! hath slain.  
A. Thy father, and his wife, and thirdly thee.  
H. Yea, and I therefore mourn my sire's ill hap.  
A. Snared was he by a goddess's deceit.  
H. Oh ! for your sorrow in this woe, my father !  
T. Son ! I have perished : life has now no joy.  
H. I mourn this error more for you than me.  
T. Would, son, I were a corpse instead of you.  
A. Stay ! for though earth and gloom encircle thee,  
Not even thus the anger unavenged  
Of Kupris shall devour at will thy body :  
For I, with my own hand, to pay for thee,  
Will pierce of men him whom she mostly dotes on,  
With these inevitable shafts. But thou,  
As guerdon for thine anguish, shalt henceforth  
Gain highest honours in Træzenian land,  
My gift. Unwedded maids before their bridals  
Shall shear their locks for thee, and thou for ever  
Shalt reap the harvest of unnumbered tears.  
Yea, and for aye, with lyre and song the virgins  
Shall keep thy memory ; nor shall Phædra's love  
For thee unnamed fall in oblivious silence.  
But thou, O son of aged Ægeus, take  
Thy child within thy arms and cherish him ;  
For without guile thou slewest him, and men,  
When the gods lead, may well lapse into error.  
Thee too I counsel ; hate not thy own father,  
Hippolytus : 'twas fate that ruined thee."

Thus Artemis reconciles father and son. Hippolytus dies slowly in the arms of Theseus, and the play ends. The appearance of the goddess, as a lady of transcendent power more than as a divine being—her vindictive hatred of Aphrodite, and the moral that she draws about the fate by which Hippolytus died and Theseus sinned, are all thoroughly Euripidean. Not so would Æschylus the theologian, or Sophocles the moralist, have dealt with the conclusion of the play. But neither would have drawn a more touching picture.

The following scene from the opening of the *Orestes* may be taken as a complete specimen of the manner of Euripides when working pathos to its highest pitch, and when desirous of introducing into mythic history the realities of common life. Electra appears as the devoted sister; Orestes as the invalid brother; the Chorus are somewhat importunate, but, at the same time, sympathetic visitors. This extract also serves to illustrate the Euripidean habit of mingling lyrical dialogue with the more regular iambic in passages which do not exactly correspond to the *Commos* of the elder tragedians, but which require highly-wrought expression. Helen has just left Electra. As the wife of Menelaus walks away, the daughter of Agamemnon follows her with her eyes, and speaks thus:—

“*El.* O nature! what a curse art thou ’mid men—

Yea, and a safeguard to the nobly-tempered!

[*Points her finger at Helen.*]

See how she snipped the tips of her long hair,  
Saving its beauty! She’s the same woman still,—

May the gods hate thee for the ruin wrought

On me, on him, on Hellas! Woe is me!

[*Sees the Chorus advancing.*]

Here come my friends again with lamentations,  
To join their wails with mine: they’ll drive him far  
From placid slumber, and will waste mine eyes  
With weeping when I see my brother mad.

[*Speaking to the Chorus.*]

*Artemis.*

*The opening  
of the  
Orestes.*

O dearest maidens, tread with feet of wool ;  
 Come softly, make no rustling, raise no cry :  
 For though your kindness be right dear to me,  
 Yet to wake him will work me double mischief.

[*The Chorus enters.*]

- Ch.* Softly, softly ! let your tread  
 Fall upon the ground like snow !  
 Every sound be dumb and dead :  
 Breathe and speak in murmurs low !
- El.* Further from the couch, I pray you ; further yet, and yet away !
- Ch.* Even so, dear maid, you see that I obey.
- El.* Ah, my friend, speak softly, slowly,  
 Like the sighing of a rush.
- Ch.* See I speak and answer lowly  
 With a stealthy smothered hush.
- El.* That is right : come hither now ; come boldly forward to my side ;  
 Come, and say what need hath brought you : for at length  
 with watching tried,  
 Lo, he sleeps, and on the pillow spreads his limbs and tresses  
 wide.
- Ch.* How is he ? Dear lady, say :  
 Let us hear your tale, and know  
 Whether you have joy to-day,  
 Whether sorrow brings you low.
- El.* He is breathing still, but slightly groaning in his sleep away.
- Ch.* O poor man ! but tell us plainer what you say.
- El.* Hush ! or you will scare the pleasant  
 Sleep that to his eyelids brings  
 Brief oblivion of the present.
- Ch.* Ah, thrice wretched race that springs  
 Burdened with the god-sent curses of abhorred deeds !
- El.* Ah me !  
 Guilty was the voice of Phœbus, when enthroned for prophecy  
 He decreed my mother's murder—mother murdered guiltily !
- Ch.* Look you, lady, on his bed,  
 How he gently stirs and sighs !
- El.* Woe is me ! His sleep hath fled,  
 Frightened by your noisy cries !
- Ch.* Nay ; I thought he sleeping lay.
- El.* Hence, I bid you, hence away  
 From the bedside, from the house !  
 Cease your noise ;  
 Subdue your voice ;

Stay not here to trouble us !

*Ch.* He is sleeping, and you rightly caution us.

*El.* Holy mother, mother Night !

Thou who sheddest sleep on every wearied wight !

Arise from Erebus, arise

With plummy pinions light :

Hover o'er the house of Atreus ; and upon our aching eyes,

Wearied with woe,

With grief brought low,

Solace bring 'mid miseries.

Silence ! Hush ! what noise was this ?

Can you ne'er your tongue restrain,

And allow soft slumber's kiss

To refresh his fevered brain ?

*Ch.* Tell me, lady, what the close

Of his grief is like to be ?

*El.* Death. Nought else will end his woes.

Lo, he fasts continually.

*Ch.* Alas ! Alas ! his fate is sure.

*El.* By the promise to make pure

Hands a mother's life-blood stained,

Phœbus brought

Woe, and wrought

All the grief that we have gained.

*Ch.* Just it was to slay the slayer ; yet the deed with crime was  
fraught.

*El.* Thou art dead : oh, thou art dead,

Mother, who didst bear me ! mother, who didst shed

A father's blood, and slay

The children of thy bed !

We are dying, we are dying, like the dead, and weak as they :

For thou art gone,

And I am wan,

Weeping, sighing night and day !

Look upon me, friends, behold

How my withered life must run,

Childless, homeless, sad and cold,

Comfortless beneath the sun.

*Ch.* Come hither, maid Electra, to the couch ;

Lest haply he should breathe his life away

Unheeded : I like not this deep dead languor.

[*Orestes wakes up.*]

*Or.* O soothing sleep ! dear friend ! best nurse of sickness !

- How sweetly came you in my hour of need.  
 Blest Lethe of all woes, how wise you are,  
 How worthy of the prayers of wretched men !  
 Whence came I to this place ? How journeyed I ?  
 I cannot think : my former mind is vanished.
- El.* O dearest, how hath your sleep gladdened me !  
 Say, can I help to soothe or raise your body ?
- Or.* Yea, take me, take me : with your kind hands wipe  
 The foam of fever from my lips and eyes.
- El.* Sweet is this service to me ; I am glad  
 To soothe my brother with a sister's hand.
- Or.* Support me with your breast, and fan my forehead ;  
 Brush the loose hair : I scarce can see for sickness.
- El.* Poor head ! How rough and tangled are the curls,  
 How haggard is your face with long neglect !
- Or.* Now lay me back upon the bed again :  
 When the fit leaves me, I am weak and helpless.
- El.* Yea ; and the couch is some relief in sickness,  
 A sorry friend, but one that must be borne with.
- Or.* Raise me once more upright, and turn my body :  
 Sick men are hard to please, through wayward weakness.
- El.* How would you like to put your feet to earth ?  
 'Tis long since you stood up ; and change is pleasant.
- Or.* True : for it gives a show of seeming health ;  
 And shows are good, although there be no substance.
- [Orestes changes his posture and sits at ease.]*
- El.* Now listen to me, dearest brother mine,  
 While the dread Furies leave you space to think.
- Or.* What have you new to say ? Good news will cheer me ;  
 But of what's bad I have enough already.
- El.* Menelaus is here, your father's brother :  
 His ships are safely moored in Nauplia.
- Or.* What ! Has he come to end your woes and mine ?  
 He is our kinsman and our father's debtor.
- El.* He has : and this is surety for my words—  
 Helen hath come with him from Troy, is here.
- Or.* If heaven had saved but him, he'd now be happier :  
 But with his wife, he brings a huge curse home.
- El.* Yea : Tyndareus begat a brood of daughters  
 Marked out for obloquy, a shame through Hellas.
- Or.* Be you then other than the bad ; you can :  
 Make not fine speeches, but be rightly minded !
- [As he speaks, he becomes excited.]*



*El.* Ah me, my brother ! your eyes roll and tremble—  
One moment sane, and now swift frenzy fires you !

*[Orestes speaks to phantoms in the air.]*

*Or.* Mother, I sue to thee : nay, mother, hound not  
Those blood-faced, snake-encircled women on me !  
There ! There ! See there—close by they bound upon me !

*El.* Stay, wretched brother ; start not from the bed !  
For nought you see of what seems clear and certain.

*Or.* O Phœbus ! They will slay me, those dog-faced,  
Fierce-eyed, infernal ministers, dread goddesses !

*El.* I will not leave you ! but with woven arms  
Will stay you from the direful spasm-throes.

*[Orestes hurls Electra from him.]*

*Or.* Let go ! Of my damned Furies thou art one,  
That with thy grip wouldst hale me down to hell !

*El.* Ah, woe is me ! what succour shall I find,  
Seeing the very gods conspire against us ?

*Or.* Give me my bow and arrows, Phœbus' gift,  
Wherewith Apollo bade me fight the fiends,  
If they should scare me with wild-eyed delirium.  
Some god shall feel the fury of man's hand,  
Unless ye vanish forth from out my sight !

*[He threatens the phantoms.]*

Hear ye not ! See ye not the feathery wings  
Of swift, sure-striking shafts, ready to flutter ?

Ha ! Ha !

Why linger here ? Go, sweep with outspread pinions  
The windy sky ! Hence, and complain of Phœbus !  
Woe's me !

*[Recovering his reason again.]*

Why waste I breath, wearying my lungs in vain ?  
Where am I ? From my bed how leaped I—when ?  
'Midmost the waves once more I see fair weather.  
Sister, why weep you ? Wherefore veil your head ?  
I blush to see you partner of my woe,  
Blush that a girl should suffer in my sickness.  
Nay, do not pine thus, bowed beneath my burden—  
All mine ;—you said but yea ; 'twas I who shed  
Our mother's blood : but Loxias I blame,  
Who urging me to most unholy deeds  
Helped me with words, in act availed me nothing.  
Yea, and I think my sire, if, face to face,  
I asked him—is it right to slay my mother ?

Would lengthen many prayers, beseeching me  
 Never to draw my sword on her who bare me,  
 Seeing he might not see the sun again,  
 And I am doomed to bear this weight of horrors.—  
 But now unveil your face again, dear sister,  
 And cease from weeping—even though we be  
 Ringed round with sorrows. When you see me downcast,  
 Soothe you my terror and my frenzied soul—  
 Soothe and caress me ; yea, and when you moan,  
 'Tis mine to stay and comfort as I can :  
 For these kind services of friends are fair,  
 But, dear, sad sister, go into the house,  
 And give your watchful eyes to sleep, and rest ;  
 Take food, and with fair water bathe yourself.  
 For think, if you should fail me, if by watching  
 You take some sickness, then we're lost : 'tis you,  
 You only, are my help ; all else is vanished.

*El.* Not so. With you to die I choose, with you  
 To live : it is all one : for if you perish,  
 What shall I do—a woman ? How shall I,  
 Brotherless, friendless, fatherless, alone,  
 Live on ? Nay, if you ask it, I will do  
 Your will : but, brother, rest you on your bed ;  
 Nor take the terror and the startling fear  
 For more than phantoms : stay upon the couch  
 For though one is not sick, and only seems,  
 Yet is this pain and weariness to mortals."

*Or.* 126-315.

Melodrama-  
 tic effects.

This scene, for variety of motive and effect, is not excelled by any passage in ancient tragedy. The scope which it afforded for impressive acting must have been immense, though it is difficult to understand how the fixed masks and conventional dresses of the Greek stage could have been adapted to the violent and frequent changes of mood exhibited by Orestes. Adequately to render the effect of the lyrical dialogue between Electra and the Chorus is very difficult. I have attempted to maintain in some degree the antistrophic pauses, and by the use of rhyme, to hint how very near the tragedy of the Greeks approached, in scenes like this, to the Italian opera. The entrance of the Chorus singing "Silence," can only be

paralleled by passages in which the spies or conspirators of Rossini or Mozart appear upon the stage, whispering "Zitto, Zitto!" to the sound of subdued music. In the same way Electra's impassioned apostrophe to Night must have been the subject of an elaborate Aria.

The scene which I have translated from the *Orestes* suggests the remark that many Euripidean plays were in fact melodramas. This is true, in a special sense, of the *Troades*, which must have owed its interest as an acted drama to the music and the *mise en scène*. It is also worthy of notice that a fair proportion of our extant tragedies are what the Germans call *Lustspiele*. That is to say, they have no proper tragic ending, and the element of tragedy contained in them consists of perils escaped by the chief actors. Thus the *Helena* and the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* have a joyful climax. The *Orestes* closes with a reconciliation of all parties, hurriedly effected, that reminds us of a modern comedy. The *Ion* is brought to a satisfactory conclusion. The apotheosis of Iphigeneia in her play at Aulis eliminates the tragic element, though, regarded as the first part of an eminently tragic series and read by the light of the *Electra*, this play may be regarded as the prologue to a mighty drama of crime and retribution. The *Alcestis* is now universally and rightly classed among the plays of a semi-satyrical character; and the *Andromache* is not a genuine tragedy, since the death of Neoptolemus is episodic and has little to do with the previous action. In all these plays the keynote is struck by the Greek phrase *μεταβολή*, which signified a revolution brought about within the limits of a certain situation. This probably attracted Euripides to the class of drama in question, since it enabled him to deal freely with character and to concentrate his attention upon the working out of striking incidents. From this point of view the *Andromache* is so important that it deserves more than a passing notice. The peculiar faculty and the prevailing faults of the poet are alike

Tragi-comic terminations to plays.

The *Andromache*.

Action of  
the play.

illustrated in its scenes—his fine and sharp character-marking in the chief personages, his powerful rhetoric and subtle special-pleading, his acute remarks on politics and domestic relations, no less than his wilful neglect of dramatic unity and wanton carelessness of construction. Viewed in one light, the *Andromache* is a bitter satire upon the Spartan type of character, exemplified in the cruel Hermione and the treacherous Menelaus. From yet another standpoint of criticism it may be regarded as a dramatic essay on the choice of wives and the economy of the household. Thus the political and social theorist overlays the artist proper in this play; and yet the language is so brilliant, the pathos is so telling, and the lyrical episodes are so musical that we understand its popularity among the ancients. At the opening of the drama, Andromache, who has taken sanctuary at Phthia in the shrine of Thetis, describes the misery of her situation as bondwoman and concubine to Neoptolemus. Though warmly attached to herself and the father of her son Molossus, he has recently married Hermione, the Spartan princess. Thus the true subject of the play is set before us; for if the *Andromache* has any unity of conception, we must find it in the “nuptial choice” of Neoptolemus, who, after bringing discord into his household by the jealousy of two women, eventually meets his death as an indirect consequence of this domestic folly. The elegiac lamentations of the Trojan princess and the tender remonstrances of the Chorus, which follow the prologue, are among the most melodious passages of poetry in Euripides. Then the action begins. Neoptolemus is away at Delphi. Hermione and her father, Menelaus, remain at home, and use the opportunity for persecuting Andromache. In a long and agitating scene with Hermione, the heroine shows that she remains a noble lady, of untamed and royal soul, in spite of slavery. She disregards all threats, and maintains her station at the altar, whither she has fled for safety. One menace only makes her flinch. It is that violence may be done to her child

Molossus, if she will not move. Now Menelaus enters, and the altercations are repeated, all tending to the same point of proving the odiousness of the Spartan character and the dignity of Andromache. Meanwhile our interest in her misfortunes is gradually heightened ; and we tremble for her when at last Menelaus persuades the suppliant to leave the sanctuary by assuring her that the only way of saving Molossus is to sacrifice her own life. At this point the pathos of the situation becomes truly Euripidean. We have the spectacle of a tender and helpless mother in the power of a merciless tyrant, obliged to give her own life for her son, not shrinking from the sacrifice, but dreading to leave him unprotected to his future fate amid unkindly aliens. She rises from the altar ; and no sooner is she in the hands of Menelaus, than he tells her that his promises were fraudulent. Molossus will be butchered after all. Then follows a great scene of high-wrought feeling. Andromache and Molossus are kneeling before Menelaus praying for their lives, when Peleus, the aged grandfather of Neoptolemus, appears and stays the execution. Euripides has drawn the character of Peleus with something of the heat and fury of the Sophoclean Teiresias. The old king does not spare Menelaus, but makes his tongue a scourge to flay him with invective. The end of the struggle is that Peleus conveys Andromache and the boy safely away ; and during the rest of the drama we hear nothing of them. Meantime Hermione, who, in contrast to Andromache's noble firmness and womanhood, is the type of *impotentia*, as quick to self-abandonment as she was blind in selfish cruelty, begins to reflect upon her husband's anger. What will he say and do if he returns and hears of her intention with regard to Andromache ? She is only just prevented from committing suicide, and lies sunk in contemptible remorse, when a new actor appears upon the scene. It is Orestes, to whom Hermione had been affianced at Argos. The treacherous Menelaus preferred to give her to a more

Solution of  
the dramatic  
knot.

Weak and  
strong  
points of the  
*Andromache*.

fortunate and respectable husband ; but Orestes has a mind to wed her still, and has resolved to murder Neoptolemus at Delphi because of the insult put upon himself. He therefore removes Hermione from the palace, and departs for Delphi. Peleus is now left alone upon the stage, to hear of the murder of his grandson from a messenger, and to receive instructions from Thetis as to the future of the realm of Phthia. It will be seen that the construction of this drama is defective, and that it has two separate plots, the one relating to Andromache, the other to Hermione and Orestes, which are only brought into artificial connection by the death of Neoptolemus. The speedy disappearance of Andromache from the scene, followed by the flight of Hermione and the escape of Menelaus to Sparta, leaves Peleus, who is only an accessory character, to bear the whole burden of the climax. Thus the *Andromache* lacks both internal and external unity, the unity of subject and form. Of material it has plenty, whether we regard the revolutions of fortune effected for the chief actors, or the variety of incidents, or the richness of reflective sentences, or the introduction of new "business" to sustain the flagging interest of the spectators. As a drama, it is second-rate. As a machine for the exhibition of specifically Euripidean qualities, it must rank high among the extant tragedies.

The  
Euripidean  
Oresteia.

The *Iphigeneia in Aulide*, the *Electra*, the *Orestes*, and the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* might be called the Euripidean Oresteia, since each of these plays treats that portion of the Atridan story which Æschylus had handled in his three dramas. We miss the final purification of the hero, and have to infer the climax from the allusions of the *Andromache*, where, it may be said in passing, the noble type of his character, maintained without interruption in the *Electra*, the *Orestes*, and the *Tauric Iphigeneia*, is deformed by a savagery and guile that must have been repellent even to a Greek audience. In the *Electra* Euripides comes immediately and without doubt consciously into competition with both Æschylus and Sophocles. Like

Sophocles, he has painted Electra as of harder nature than The Electra. her brother. When Orestes, before engaging in his mother's murder, shows signs of yielding to his filial feeling and expresses a doubt about the oracle, she, like Lady Macbeth, reanimates his wavering courage with argument and taunt. But Euripides seems to have felt that it was unnatural in the Sophoclean drama to represent both brother and sister as unterrified by conscience after the successful issue of their plot. The lyrical dialogue between Orestes and Electra, when he returns with their mother's blood upon his hands and sword, is both terribly true to nature and dramatically striking. It needs the appearance of the Dioscuri to confirm them in the faith that they had done a righteous, heaven-appointed deed of justice. By this touch Euripides proved his determination to bring even the most mysterious of legends within the pale of ordinary human experience. The situation in which he places Electra at the opening of the play, outcast from her father's palace and wedded to a farmer, ragged in attire and obliged to do the hard work of her household, is another and perhaps a less justifiable instance of his realism. The stirring of compassion by the exhibition of material misery was one of the points urged against him by Aristophanes; nor is it possible to feel that Electra's squalor adds anything essential to her tragedy. We may, however, be thankful to the poet for the democratic ideal of good manners and true chivalry, irrespective of blood and accidental breeding, which he has painted in his portrait of Electra's husband.<sup>1</sup> Not contented with thus varying the earlier outlines of the legend, Euripides in more than one passage directs a New situations introduced. covert criticism against his predecessors. He shows that the tests of his identity offered by Orestes to Electra in the plays of Æschylus and Sophocles were insufficient, and that the murder of Clytemnestra in her palace, surrounded by the guard of a royal household, was improbable. The

<sup>1</sup> Notice especially the speech of Orestes, line 367.

new motives invented by him for the recognition of Orestes and for the withdrawing of the queen to a place where she could be conveniently despatched are highly ingenious. Yet in the latter circumstance, what he gained in realism he lost in dramatic effect; for it was an incident of appalling terror that Clytemnestra and her paramour should be smitten in those very recesses of the palace where they had slaughtered Agamemnon, beneath the influence of those domestic Furies who, like an infernal revel, occupied the house of Atreus until all the guilty blood was shed. Throughout the *Electra* we feel that we are in the presence of a critical, realistic, and at the same time romantic poet, who has embroidered the old material of heroic story with modern casuistry, and has been working less with a view to producing a masterpiece of art than with the object of asserting his ingenuity within the narrow field of an exhausted legend. Had we not the *Choëphoræ* and the Sophoclean *Electra* for standards of comparison, it is possible that we might do simpler justice to the creative power of "sad Electra's poet" in this drama. As it is, we can hardly refrain from treating it as a triumph of skill and reflective ability, rather than as a potent work of original genius.

The climax  
of the  
*Orestes*.

The *Orestes* lies open to even more stringent criticism. The whole conclusion, consisting of the burning of the palace at Argos, the apotheosis of Helen, the lamentations of the Phrygian slave, and the betrothal of direst enemies above the ruins of their ancestral home, is more comic than tragic, and almost justifies the theory that Euripides intended it to be a parody of some contemporary drama. This portion of the play, moreover, is a melodrama, and joins on to the first part by a merely formal link. Such interest as the *Orestes* possesses, after the beautiful opening scene, centres in the heroic friendship of Pylades, who sustains the hero in his suffering and defends him from the angry folk of Argos. It is far otherwise with the *Tauric Iphigeneia*. Here Euripides



comes into no competition with Æschylus or Sophocles; for he has handled a legend outside the sphere of their known plays. It is one eminently suited to his powers, involving the description of romantic scenery, the recognition of brother by sister in circumstances of deep pathos and extreme improbability, the contest of the most powerful natural feelings, and in the last place, the exhibition of dangers impending upon all the chief personages and only avoided by a thoroughly Euripidean fraud. None of the plots invented by Euripides are so nicely finished or so rich in incident as this; and yet there is nothing mechanical in its construction. Few of his plays have choral passages to match the yearnings of the captive maidens for their home in Hellas, or the praise of young Apollo throned by Zeus for prophecy beneath Parnassus. Few again are richer or more truthful in their presentation of emotions—the exquisite delicacy of a sister's affection, the loyalty of friends, and the passionate outpouring of a brother's love. Something in the savage circumstances of the play, the sombre Tauric scenery, the dreadful rites of Artemis, to whom Iphigeneia has been bound, and the watchful jealousy of her barbarian king, enhances the beautiful humanity of those three Greeks, burdened with such weight of sorrows on a foreign shore, haunted by memories of a father's cruelty, a mother's infidelity, pursued by the Furies of a righteous but abominable deed, yet none the less enjoying for one moment in the midst of pain and peril the pure pleasures of companionship. The chorus of Hellenic captives maintains an undercurrent of sad music that still further helps to heighten and interpret the situation. It is only at the last, when the knot of the situation has to be cut, that our sympathy begins to fail us. Thoas, though a barbarian, had been generous and kind. Yet Iphigeneia employs a heartless device for escaping from his hands with the sacred image of the Tauri in her possession; nor does she feel a moment's pang of remorse for the pain she is inflicting or for the lies

*The  
Iphigeneia  
in Tauris.*

*Heightened  
poetry of  
this play.*

Frauds and  
subterfuges.

The *Ion*, and  
its ethics.

she has employed to serve her purpose. It may indeed be said generally that Euripides justified the Aristophanic reproach of meanness by his too frequent employment of tricks and subterfuges. These are so distasteful to modern feeling that we are glad to know that even a Greek critic regarded them as faulty. With Iphigeneia's treason against Thoas we might compare Helen's plot for deceiving Theoclymenus, the insidious attack of Orestes upon Neoptolemus at Delphi, the capture of Helen and Hermione by Orestes and Pylades at Argos, and Agamemnon's incredibly base lure to Clytemnestra and Iphigeneia before Aulis. It is scarcely a defence of Euripides to urge that the gods themselves, as in the case of the Tauric Iphigeneia, sanction these deceptions. This only makes the matter worse, and forces us to choose between two hypotheses—either that Euripides sought to bring the old religion into contempt, or that he used its morality for merely theatrical purposes in order to justify the romantic crimes of his heroes. The latter seems the more probable theory; for it is clear in some most eminent examples that he has treated a deeply immoral legend for the sake of its admirable artistic capabilities. This is undoubtedly the case with the *Ion*, which presents a marvellous tale of human suffering, adventure, crime, and final felicity, dependent in all its details upon the fraud of a deity. Without doing justice to the masterly construction of the plot, the beautiful poetry, and the sustained interest of the *Ion*, it may be allowed me here to dwell for one moment in its morality. Phœbus begets the boy Ion by a rape upon Creusa, and steals the boy away from Athens to Delphi. The mother is left to bewail not her shame only, but the loss of her son. In course of time she marries Xuthus and is childless. They go together to Delphi to inquire of the oracle; and here Xuthus is lyingly informed that Ion is the son of his youthful years. Rage and jealousy impel Creusa, on hearing this news, to poison Ion. She fails, and Ion in revenge attempts to murder her. The danger of

Creusa at last forces Phœbus to reveal the truth through the mouth of Athene, who tells the queen that Ion is really her lost son, the offspring of Apollo's crime. Xuthus happens to be absent during this disclosure, and the goddess advises Creusa to keep the real truth to herself, since the good man already supposes Ion to be his own child, and will consequently treat him like a son. Stripped of its dramatic ornaments, its wonderful scene-painting, pathetic situations, unexpected recognitions, sudden catastrophes, accidents and dangers and adventures, this is the plain legend of the *Ion*; and a less ethical story of the gods could scarcely be found among those which Plato criticised in the *Republic*.

It is time to return from this digression once more to the plays which deal with Orestes. In them Euripides painted a virtue dear in its heroic aspect to the Greeks and celebrated in many of their legends, but which had not frequently been made the subject of dramatic presentation. The character of Pylades as the perfect comrade, fierce as a tiger and cunning as a fox against his foes, but tender as a woman to his suffering friend, willing to face all dangers in common with Orestes, enduring for his sake the obloquy of the world and the mysterious taint of religious impurity, refusing to live in his death and contending with him for the right to die, must be accepted as a masterpiece of creative power. There is nothing in common between Pylades and the confidant of modern tragedy—that *alter ego* or shadow of the hero's self, who dogs his path and reflects his sentiments. Pylades has a distinctly separate personality; in the *Orestes*, when Electra and her brother have abandoned hope, he takes the initiative and suggests the scheme that saves them. Yet none the less is sympathy the main point in his character. Euripides wrote nothing more touching than the description of his help afforded to Orestes in the council of the Argives, nothing more sublime than the contest between the two comrades in the *Tauric Iphigeneia*, when it is a question which of them should

Friendship  
of Pylades.  
for Orestes.

stay and by his own death save his friend for Hellas. Had the Athenians thus always thought of friendship, or had they learned the enthusiasm of its ideal from Euripides, they might indeed have bequeathed a new chivalry to the world. The three tragedies in which Pylades plays a prominent part, the *Electra*, *Orestes*, and *Tauric Iphigeneia*, are storehouses of the noblest sentiments and deepest truths about heroic friendship.

The real  
greatness of  
Euripides.

It is hard, while still beneath the overshadowing presence of so great a master as Euripides, to have patience with the critics and the scholars who scorn him—critics who cannot comprehend him, scholars who have not read him since they were at school. Decadence! is their cry. Yet what would they have? Would they ask for a second Sophocles, or a revived Æschylus? That being clearly impossible, beyond all scope of wish, why will they not be satisfied with beauty as luminous as that of a Greek statue or a Greek landscape, with feeling as profound as humanity itself, and with wisdom “musical as is Apollo’s lute?” These are the qualities of a great poet, and we contend that Euripides possesses them in an eminent degree. It is false criticism, surely, to do as Schlegel, Müller, and Bunsen have successively done<sup>1</sup>—to

<sup>1</sup> Goethe was very severe on the critics who could not appreciate Euripides: “To feel and respect a great personality, one must be something oneself. All those who denied the sublime to Euripides, were either poor wretches incapable of comprehending such sublimity, or shameless charlatans, who, by their presumption, wished to make more of themselves, and really did make more of themselves than they were” (Eckermann’s *Conversations of Goethe*, English ed., vol. ii. p. 377). In another place he indicates the spirit in which any adverse criticism of Euripides should be attempted: “A poet whom Socrates called his friend, whom Aristotle lauded, whom Menander admired, and for whom Sophocles and the city of Athens put on mourning on hearing of his death, must certainly have been something. If a modern man like Schlegel must pick out faults in so great an ancient, he ought only to do it upon his knees” (*ib.* vol. i. p. 378). Again (*ib.* vol. i. p. 260), he energetically combats the opinion that Euripides had caused the decline of Greek tragedy.

measure Euripides by the standard of the success of his predecessors, or to ransack his plays for illustrations of pet dramatic theories, and then because he will not bear these tests, to refuse to see his own distinguished merits. It would sometimes seem as if our nature were exhausted by its admiration of a Sophocles or a Shakespeare. There is no enthusiasm left for Euripides and Fletcher.

Euripides, after all is said, incontestably displays the quality of radiancy. On this I should be willing to base a portion of his claim to rank as a great poet. An admirer of Æschylus or Sophocles might affirm that neither Æschylus nor Sophocles chose to use their art for the display of thrilling splendour. However that may be, Euripides, alone of Greeks, with the exception of Aristophanes, entered the fairyland of dazzling fancy which Calderon and Shakespeare and Fletcher trod. The *Bacchæ*, like the *Birds*, proves what otherwise we might have hardly known, that there lacked not Greeks for whom the *Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would have been intelligible. Meanwhile, in making any estimate of the merits of Euripides, it would be unfair to omit mention of the enthusiasm felt for him by contemporaries and posterity. Mr. Browning, in the beautiful monument which he has erected to the fame of Euripides, has chosen for poetical treatment the well-known story of Athenians rescued from captivity by recitation of the verses of their poet.<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to doubt a story which attests so strongly to the acceptance in which Euripides was held at large among the Greeks. Socrates, again, visited the theatre on the occasion of any representation of his favourite's plays. By the new comedians, Menander and Philemon, Euripides was regarded as a divine

Splendour of  
his poetry.

<sup>1</sup> See *Balaustion's Adventure*. Since this chapter was first published, Mr. Browning has still further enforced his advocacy of Euripides by *Aristophanes' Apology*, while the great tragic poet has found a staunch defender from the carping critics of the Schlegel school in Dr. Mahaffy.

Posthumous  
fame of  
Euripides.

miracle. Tragedy and comedy, so dissimilar in their origins, had approximated to a coalition; tragedy losing its religious dignity, comedy quitting its obscene though splendid personalities; both meeting on the common ground of daily life. In the decadence of Greece it was not Æschylus and Aristophanes, but Euripides and Menander, who were learned and read and quoted. The colossal theosophemes of Æschylus called for profound reflection; the Titanic jokes of Aristophanes taxed the imagination to its utmost stretch. But Euripides "the human, with his droppings of warm tears," gently touched and soothed the heart. Menander with his facile wisdom flattered the intellect of worldly men. The sentences of both were quotable at large and fit for all occasions. They were not too great, too lofty, too resplendent for the paths of common life. We have lost Menander, alas! but we still possess Euripides. It seems a strange neglect of good gifts to shut our ears to his pathetic melodies and ringing eloquence—because, forsooth, Æschylus and Sophocles had the advantage of preceding him, and were superior artists in the bloom and heyday of the young world's prime.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE FRAGMENTS OF ÆSCHYLUS, SOPHOCLES, EURIPIDES

Alexandrian and Byzantine Anthologies—Titles of the Lost Plays of Æschylus—The *Lycurgeia*—The Trilogy on the Story of Achilles—The Geography of the *Prometheus Unbound*—Gnomic Character of the Sophoclean Fragments—Providence, Wealth, Love, Marriage, Mourning—What is true of the Sophoclean is still more true of the Euripidean Fragments—Mutilated Plays—*Phalthon*, *Erechtheus*, *Antiope*, *Danaë*—Goethe's Restitution of the *Phalthon*—Passage on Greek Athletes in the *Autolycus*—Love, Women, Marriage, Domestic Affection, Children—Death—Stoical Endurance—Justice and the Punishment of Sin—Wealth—Noble Birth—Heroism—Miscellaneous Gnomic Fragments—The Popularity of Euripides.

It is difficult to treat the fragments of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides otherwise than as a golden treasury of saws and maxims, compiled by Alexandrian and Byzantine Greeks, for whom poetic beauty was of less value than sententious wisdom. The tragic scope and the æsthetic handling of the fables of their lost plays can scarcely be conjectured from such slight hints as we possess. Yet some light may be cast upon the Æschylean method by observing the titles of his dramas. We have, for example, the names of a complete tetralogy upon the legend of Lycurgus. The *Edonians*, the *Bassarids*, and the *Young Men*, constituted a connected series of plays, a *Lycurgeia*, with *Lycurgus* for the satyric supplement. Remembering that Æschylus called his own tragedies morsels picked up from the great Homeric banquet-table, we may

Æschylean  
fragments  
from the  
Homeric  
table.

conclude that this tetralogy set forth the Dionysian fable told by Diomedes to Glaucus in the *Iliad* (vi. 131).<sup>1</sup>

"No, for not Dryas' son, Lycurgus strong,  
 Who the divine ones fought, on earth lived long.  
 He the nurse-nymphs of Dionysus scared  
 Down the Nyseian steep, and the wild throng  
 Their ritual things cast off, and maddening fared,  
 Torn with his goad, like kine ; so vast a crime he dared.  
 Yea, Dionysus, such a sight was there,  
 Himself in fear sank down beneath the seas.  
 And Thetis in her breast him quailing bare,  
 At the man's cry such trembling shook his knees.  
 Then angered were the gods who live at ease,  
 And Zeus smote blind Lycurgus, and he fell  
 Loathed ere his day."

The  
*Lycurgeia*.

It appears that the titles of the three dramas composing the trilogy were taken from the Chorus. In the first play the Edonian Thracians, subjects of Lycurgus, formed the Chorus ; in the second, the Bassarids, or nurse-nymphs of Dionysus ; in the third, the youths whom the wine-god had persuaded to adopt his worship. The subject of the first play was, therefore, the advent of Dionysus and his following in Thrace, and the victory of Lycurgus over the new cult. The second set forth the captivity of the Bacchantes or Bassarids, together with the madness sent upon Lycurgus as a punishment for his resistance, whereby he was driven, according to post-Homeric versions of his legend, to the murder of his own son Dryas in a fit of fury. The third play carried on the subject by exhibiting the submission of Lycurgus to the god whom he had disowned and dishonoured, and his death, at the hands of his own subjects, upon Mount Pangæus. Thus the first Chorus was hostile to Dionysus ; the second was sympathetic, though captive and impotent ; the third was triumphant in his cause. The artistic sequence of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis which the trilogy required, was developed through

<sup>1</sup> Worsley's translation, *Iliad*, vol. i. p. 154.



three moments in the life-drama of Lycurgus, and was typified in the changes of the choric sympathy, according to the law whereby Æschylus varied the form of his triple dramas and at the same time immediately connected the Chorus with the passion of each piece. The tragic interest centred in the conflict of Lycurgus and the god, and the final solution was afforded by the submission, though too late, of the protagonist's will to destiny. It is probable that the satyric play of *Lycurgus* represented the divine honours paid, after his death, to the old enemy, now become the satellite and subject of Dionysus, by pastoral folk and dwellers in the woodlands. The unification of obstinate antagonistic wills in the higher will of Zeus or Fate seems in all cases to have supplied Æschylus with the *Versöhnung* tragedy required, and to have suggested the religious *κάθαρσις* (purgation) without which the Greek drama would have failed to point its lesson. Seen in this light, the *Lycurgeia* must have been a masterpiece only less sublime, and even more full, perhaps, of picturesque incidents, than the Promethean trilogy. The emotional complexion, if that phrase may be permitted, of each member of the trilogy was determined by the Chorus; wherein we trace a signal instance of the Æschylean method.

More even to be regretted than the *Lycurgeia* is a colossal lost trilogy to which the name of *Tragic Iliad* has been given. That Æschylus should have frequently handled the subject-matter of the *Iliad* was natural; and many titles of tragedies, quoted singly, point to his preoccupation with the mythus of Achilles. It has therefore been conjectured, with fair show of reason, that the *Myrmidones*, the *Nereides*, and the *Phrygians* formed a triple drama. The first described the withdrawal of Achilles from the war, the arming of Patroclus, and the grief which the son of Peleus felt for his friend's death. No Greek tragedy, had it been preserved, would have been more precious than this. The second showed how Thetis comforted her child, and procured fresh armour for him from Hephæstus,

The *Tragic Iliad*.

Achilles and  
Patroclus.

and how Achilles slew Hector. In the third, Priam recovered the dead body of his son and buried it. Supposing the trilogy to have been constructed upon these outlines, it must have resembled a gigantic history-play, in which, as in the *Iliad* itself, the character of Achilles was sufficient to form the groundwork of a complicated poem. The theme, in other words, would have resembled those of the modern and romantic drama, rather than such as the elder Greek poets were in the habit of choosing. The *Achilleis* did not in any direct way illustrate the doctrine of Nemesis, or afford a tragic conflict between the human will and fate. It owed its lustre to the radiant beauty of the hero, to the pathos of his love for Patroclus, to the sudden blazing forth of irresistible energy when sorrow for the dead had driven him to revenge, and to the tranquillity succeeding tempest that dignified his generous compliance with the prayers of Priam. The trilogy composed upon it must therefore, like a Shakespearean play, have been a drama of character. The fragments of the *Myrmidones* have already been pieced together in the chapter on the Homeric Achilles.<sup>1</sup> From the *Nereides* nothing has survived except what may be gathered from the meagre remnants of the Latin version made of it by Attius. The *Phrygians*, also called "*Εκτορος λύτρα* (Hector's Ransom), contained a speech of pleading addressed by Priam to the hero in his tent, of which the following is a relic : <sup>2</sup>—

καὶ τοὺς θανόντας εἰ θέλεις εὐεργετεῖν,  
τὸ γοῦν κακουργεῖν ἀμφιδεξίως ἔχει  
καὶ μῆτε χαίρειν μῆτε λυπεῖσθαι πάρα.  
ἡμῶν γε μέντοι Νέμεσις ἐσθ' ὑπερτέρα  
καὶ τοῦ θανόντος ἡ δίκη πράσσει κόνιν.

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. chap. iii.

<sup>2</sup> "Lo, if thou fain wouldst benefit the dead,  
Or if thou seek to harm them, 'tis all one ;  
For they can feel no joy nor suffer pain.  
Nathless high Nemesis is throned above us,  
And Justice doth exact the dead man's due."

The trilogy of which the *Prometheus Bound* formed probably the middle play has been sufficiently discussed in the chapter on Æschylus.<sup>1</sup> It remains in this place only to notice that the gigantic geography of the poet received further illustration in the lost play of the *Prometheus Unbound*. "Cette géographie vertigineuse," says Victor Hugo, "est mêlée à une tragédie extraordinaire où l'on entend des dialogues plus qu'humains ;" and, inverting this observation, we may add that the super-human tragedy of the *Prometheia* owed much of its grandeur to the soul-dilating prospect of the earth's map, outstretched before the far-seeing sufferer on the crags of Caucasus.

Two other trilogies—a *Danaïs*, composed of the *Egyptians*, the *Suppliants*, and the *Danaïdes* ; and an *Ædipodeia*, composed of *Laius*, the *Sphinx*, and *Ædipus*—may be mentioned, though to recover their outlines with any certainty is now hopeless. For the rest, it must be enough to transcribe and to translate a few fragments of singular beauty. Here is an invocation uttered in his hour of anguish by Philoctetes to Death, the deliverer :<sup>2</sup>—

ὦ θάνατε παιὼν μή μ' ἀτιμάσῃς μολεῖν·  
μόνος γὰρ εἴ σὺ τῶν ἀνηκέστων κακῶν  
ἱατρός· ἄλγος δ' οὐδὲν ἄπτεται νεκροῦ.

Another passage on Death, remarkable for the stately grandeur of its style, may be quoted from the *Niobe* :<sup>3</sup>—

μόνος θεῶν γὰρ θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἐρᾷ,  
οὐτ' ἂν τι θύων οὐτ' ἐπισπένδων ἀνοῖς,  
οὐ βωμός ἐστιν οὐδὲ παιωνίζεται.  
μόνου δὲ πειθῶ δαιμόνων ἀποστατεῖ.

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. chap. xii.

<sup>2</sup> "O Death, the saviour, spurn me not, but come !  
For thou alone of ills incurable  
Art healer : no pain preyeth on the dead."

<sup>3</sup> "Alone of gods Death loves not gifts ; with him  
Nor sacrifice nor incense aught avails ;  
He hath no altar and no hymns of gladness ;  
Prayer stands aloof from him, Persuasion fails."

The sublime speech of Aphrodite in the *Danaïdes*, imitated more than once by subsequent poets, must not be omitted :<sup>1</sup>—

ἐρᾷ μὲν ἄγνους οὐρονὸς τρῶσαι χθόνα,  
ἔρως δὲ γαῖαν λαμβάνει γάμου τυχεῖν·  
ὄμβρος δ' ἀπ' εὐνάντος ο' ρανοῦ πεσὼν  
ἔκνυε γαῖαν· ἡ δὲ τίκτεται βροτοῖς  
μήλων τε βοσκὰς καὶ βίον Δημήτριον·  
δενδρῶτις ὦρα δ' ἐκ νοτίζοντος γάμου  
τέλειός ἐστι· τῶν δ' ἐγὼ παραίτιος.

Nor, lastly, the mystic couplet ascribed to both Æschylus and his son Euphorion :<sup>2</sup>—

Ζεὺς ἐστὶν αἰθὴρ, Ζεὺς δὲ γῆ, Ζεὺς δ' οὐρανός,  
Ζεὺς τοι τὰ πάντα, χῶ τι τῶνδ' ὑπέρτερον.

Sophoclean  
fragments—  
The *Lovers*  
of *Achilles*.

The fragments of Sophocles are, perhaps, in even a stricter sense than those of Æschylus, a bare anthology, and the best way of dealing with them is to select those which illustrate the beauty of his style or the ripeness of his wisdom. Few indeed are full enough to afford materials for reconstructing the plot of a lost play. What, for instance, can be more tantalising to the student of Greek manners and sentiments than to know that Sophocles wrote a drama with the title *Lovers of Achilles*, and yet to have no means of judging of its fable better than is given in this pretty simile?<sup>3</sup>—

νόσημ' ἔρωτος τοῦτ' ἐφίμερον κακόν·  
ἔχοιμ' ἂν αὐτὸ μὴ κακῶς ἀπεικάσαι,

- 
- <sup>1</sup> "Love throbs in holy heaven to wound the earth ;  
And love still prompts the land to yearn for bridal ;  
The rain that falls in rivers from the sky  
Impregnates earth, and she brings forth for men  
The flocks and herds and life of teeming Ceres ;  
The bloom of forests by dews hymeneal  
Is perfected : in all which things I rule."  
<sup>2</sup> "Zeus is the air, Zeus earth, and Zeus wide heaven :  
Yea, Zeus is all things, and what else above them."  
<sup>3</sup> "This love-disease is a delightful trouble ;  
Well might I shadow forth its power as thus :

ὅταν πάγον φάνεντος αἰθρίου χεροῖν  
κρύσταλλον ἀρπάζωσι παῖδες ἀσταγῇ.  
τὰ πρῶτ' ἔχουσιν ἡδονὰς ποταινίους,  
τέλος δ' ὁ χυμὸς οὐθ' ὅπως ἀφῇ θέλει  
οὐτ' ἐν χεροῖν τὸ κτῆμα σύμφορον μένειν.  
οὕτω γε τοὺς ἐρῶντας αὐτὸς ἡμερος  
δρᾶν καὶ τὸ μὴ δρᾶν πολλάκις προίεται.

A whole series of plays were written by Sophocles on the tale of Helen, and all of them have passed, "like shapes of clouds we form, to nothing." There was, again, a drama of the *Epigoni*, which might perhaps have carried the tale of Thebes still further than the climax reached in the *Antigone*. Yet Stobæus has only thought fit to treat us to two excerpts from it, whereof the following, spoken by Alcæon to Eriphyle, is the fullest: <sup>1</sup>—

ὦ πᾶν σὺν τολμήσασα καὶ πέρα γύναι·  
κάκιον ἄλλ' οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδ' ἔσται ποτὲ  
γυναικὸς εἶ τι πῆμα γίγνεται βροτοῖς.

The sententious philosophy of life that endeared Euripides to the compilers of commonplace books was expressed by Sophocles also, with sufficient independence of the context to make his speeches valuable as quarries for quotation. To this accident of his art is probably due the large number of fragments we possess upon general topics of morality and

---

When the clear eager frost has fallen, boys  
Seize with their fingers the firm frozen ice,  
And first they feel an unaccustomed pleasure,  
But in the end it melts, and they to leave it  
Or in their hands to hold it know not how;  
Even so the same desire drives wilful lovers  
To do and not to do by frequent changes."

<sup>1</sup> "Woman, that hast dared all, and more than all!  
There is not anything, nor will be ever,  
Than woman worse, let what will fall on men."

It is right to observe that Welcker and Ahrens have conjecturally pieced together this and many other scattered fragments, and connected them in such a way as to reconstitute a tragedy with Argos for its scene, not Thebes.

The *Aletes*.

conduct. In the following fine passage the poet discusses the apparent injustice in the apportionment of good and evil fortune to virtuous and vicious men :<sup>1</sup>—

δεινόν γε τοὺς μὲν δυσσεβεῖς κακῶν τ' ἀπο  
βλάστοντας, εἴτα τοῖσδε μὲν πρᾶσσειν καλῶς,  
τοὺς δ' ὄντας ἐσθλοὺς ἐκ τε γενναίων ἅμα  
γεγῶτας εἴτα δυστυχεῖς πεφυκέναι.  
οὐ χρὴν τὰδ' οὕτω δαίμονας θνητῶν πέρι  
πρᾶσσειν· ἐχρὴν γὰρ τοὺς μὲν εὖσεβεῖς βροτῶν  
ἔχειν τι κέρδος ἐμφανὲς θεῶν πάρα,  
τοὺς δ' ὄντας ἀδίκους τοῖσδε τὴν ἐναντίαν  
δίκην κακῶν τιμωρὸν ἐμφανῇ τίλλειν.  
κοῦδεῖς ἂν οὕτως εὐτύχει κακὸς γεγώς.

The same play furnished Stobæus with an excellent observation on garrulity :<sup>2</sup>—

ἀνὴρ γὰρ ὅστις ἡδεται λέγων αἰεὶ  
λέληθεν αὐτὸν τοῖς ξυνοῦσιν ὦν βαρύς.

Also with a good remark upon the value of sound common sense :<sup>3</sup>—

ψυχὴ γὰρ εὖνους καὶ φρονοῦσα τοῦνδικον  
κρείσσων σοφιστοῦ παντός ἐστιν εὐρέτις.

- <sup>1</sup> "'Tis terrible that impious men, the sons  
Of sinners, even such should thrive and prosper,  
While men by virtue moulded, sprung from sires  
Complete in goodness, should be born to suffer.  
Nay, but the gods do ill in dealing thus  
With mortals ! It were well that pious men  
Should take some signal guerdon at their hands ;  
But evil-doers, on their heads should fall  
Conspicuous punishment for deeds ill-done.  
Then should no wicked man fare well and flourish."

From the *Aletes*.

- <sup>2</sup> "The man who takes delight in always talking  
Is irksome to his friends and does not know it."  
<sup>3</sup> "A reasonable soul, by just perception,  
Better than sophists may discover truth."

The *Aleadae* supplied this pungent diatribe upon the contrast between poverty and wealth :<sup>1</sup>—

The *Aleadae*,  
Locrian  
Ajax, *Ægeus*.

τὰ χρήματ' ἀνθρώπουσιν εὐρίσκει φίλους,  
αὖθις δὲ τιμὰς εἶτα τῆς ὑπερτάτης  
τυραννίδος θακοῦσιν αἰσχίωτην ἔδραν.  
ἔπειτα δ' οὐδεὶς ἐχθρὸς οὔτε φύεται  
πρὸς χρήμαθ' οἳ τε φύντες ἀρνοῦνται στυγεῖν.  
δεινὸς γὰρ ἔρπειν πλούτος ἔς τε τᾶβατα  
καὶ πρὸς βέβηλα, χῶπόθεν πένης ἀνὴρ  
μηδ' ἐντυχῶν δύναται ἂν ὦν ἐρᾷ τυχεῖν.  
καὶ γὰρ δυσειδὲς σῶμα καὶ δυσώνυμον,  
γλώσση σοφὸν τίθησιν εὐμορφόν τ' ἰδεῖν.  
μόνη δὲ χαίρειν καὶ νοσεῖν ἐξουσία  
πάρεστιν αὐτῷ κάπικρύψασθαι κακά.

In the *Locrian Ajax* we find two single lines worth preservation :<sup>2</sup>—

σοφοὶ τύραννοι τῶν σοφῶν ξινοουσίᾳ.

and :<sup>3</sup>—

ἄνθρωπός ἐστι πνεῦμα καὶ σκιὰ μόνον.

This charming description comes from the *Ægeus*, recalling Athens, where the poplars grow so large and leafy :<sup>4</sup>—

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν φύλλοισιν αἰγείρου μακρᾶς,  
κἂν ἄλλο μηδὲν, ἀλλὰ τοῦκείνης κάρα  
αὖρα κραδαίνει κἀνακουφίζει πτέρον.

<sup>1</sup> "Money makes friends for men, and heaps up honours,  
And sets them on the tyrant's hated throne :  
Wealth finds no foes, or none but covert foes,  
Climbs hallowed ways, and treads where tracks are common,  
While poor men, what luck gives them may not use :  
A mis-shaped body, an ill-sounding name,  
Wealth turns by words to beauty, gifts with wisdom ;  
For wealth alone hath privilege of freedom  
In joy and sickness, and can hide its sorrow."

<sup>2</sup> "Tyrants are wise by wise society."

<sup>3</sup> "Man is but wind and shadow, nought besides."

<sup>4</sup> "As in the boughs of a tall poplar-tree,  
If nothing else, at least her shivering top  
Moves 'neath the breeze, and waves her leafy pinions."

The *Phædra*  
and the  
Colchian  
Women.

Some scattered utterances upon women and love may be collected from the *Phædra*, in which play Sophocles broke the ground trodden by Euripides :<sup>1</sup>—

ἔρως γὰρ ἀνδρας οὐ μόνους ἐπέρχεται  
οὐδ' αὖ γυναῖκας ἀλλὰ καὶ θεῶν ἄνω  
ψυχὰς χαράσσει καπὶ πόντον ἔρχεται  
καὶ τόνδ' ἀπείργειν οὐδ' ὁ παγκρατὴς σθένει  
Ζεὺς ἀλλ' ἐπείκει καὶ θέλων ἐγκλίνεται.

οὕτω γυναικὸς οὐδὲν ἂν μείζον κακὸν  
κακῆς ἀνὴρ κτήσται· ἂν οὐδὲ σῶφρονος  
κρεῖσσον· παθὼν δ' ἕκαστος ὧν τύχη λέγει.

The next fragment, extracted possibly from the *Colchian Women*, deserves to be compared with similar Euripidean passages, though in point of workmanship it is finer, and in profound suggestion more intense, than is the usual manner of Euripides :<sup>2</sup>—

ὦ παῖδες ἦ τοι Κύπρις οὐ Κύπρις μόνον  
ἀλλ' ἐστὶ πολλῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπώνυμος.  
ἔστιν μὲν Ἄιδης ἔστι δ' ἄφθιτος βία  
ἔστιν δὲ λύσσα μαινὰς ἔστι δ' ἱμερος  
ἄκρατος ἔστ' οἰμωγμός. ἐν κείνῃ τὸ πᾶν  
σπουδαῖον ἡσυχაῖον ἐς βίαν ἄγον.

<sup>1</sup> "Love falls not only on the hearts of men  
Or women, but the souls of gods above  
He furrows, and makes onslaught on the sea :  
Against his force Zeus the all-powerful  
Is impotent—he yields and bends with liking."

"Than a bad wife a man can have no greater  
Curse, and no greater blessing than a good one.  
Each after trial speaks by his experience."

<sup>2</sup> "Girls, look you, Kupris is not Kupris only :  
In her one name names manifold are blended ;  
For she is Death, imperishable power,  
Frenetic fury, irresistible longing,  
Wailing and groaning. Her one force includes  
All energy, all languor, and all violence



ἐντήκεται γὰρ πνευμόνων ὅσοις ἐνὶ  
 ψυχῇ. τίς οὐχὶ τῆσδε τῆς θεοῦ βορά ;  
 εἰσέρχεται μὲν ἰχθύων πλωτῶ γένει  
 ἐνεσσι δ' ἐν χέρσου τετρασκελεῖ γονῇ·  
 νωμᾷ δ' ἐν οἰωνοῖσι τοῦκείνης πτερὸν  
 ἐν θηρσὶν ἐν βροτοῖσιν ἐν θεοῖς ἄνω.  
 τίν' οὐ παλαιοῖς' ἐς τρεῖς ἐκβάλλει θεῶν ;  
 εἴ μοι θέμις, θέμις δὲ τάληθ' ἴλεγειν,  
 Διὸς τυραννεί πνευμόνων· ἄνευ δорὸς  
 ἄνευ σιδήρου πάντα τοι συντέμενται  
 Κύπρις τὰ θνητῶν καὶ θεῶν βουλευματα.

While upon this topic of love and women, I may quote a *The Tereus*. considerable fragment of the *Tereus*, marked by more sympathy for women in the troubles of their married lives than the Greek poets commonly express :<sup>1</sup>—

νῦν δ' οὐδὲν εἰμι χωρὶς, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις  
 ἔβλεψα ταύτῃ τὴν γυναικεῖαν φύσιν,  
 ὥς οὐδὲν ἔσμεν· αἱ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρὸς  
 ἡδιστον οἶμαι ζῶμεν ἀνθρώπων βίον·  
 τερπνῶς γὰρ αἰεὶ πάντας ἀνοῖα τρέφει.  
 ὅταν δ' ἐς ἡβην ἐξικώμεθ' εὐφρονες,  
 ὠθούμεθ' ἔξω καὶ διεμπολόμεθα

---

Into the vitals of whatever thing  
 Hath breath of life, she sinks. Who feeds her not ?  
 She creeps into the fishes of the sea  
 And the four-footed creatures of dry land,  
 Shakes 'mid the birds her own aerial plumes,  
 Sways beasts and mortal men and gods above.  
 Which of the gods hath she not thrown in wrestling ?  
 If right allow, and to speak truth is right,  
 She rules the heart of Zeus. Without or spear  
 Or sword, I therefore bid you know, Dame Kupris  
 Fells at a blow of gods and men the counsels."

- <sup>1</sup> "Now am I nought—abandoned : oftentimes  
 I've noticed how to this we women fall,  
 How we are nought. In girlhood and at home  
 Our life's the sweetest life men ever know,  
 For careless joy is a glad nurse to all :  
 But when we come to youth, gleeful and gay,  
 Forth are we thrust, and bought and sold and bartered,

θεῶν πατρῶν τῶν τε φυσάντων ἄπο,  
αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἄνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους,  
αἱ δ' εἰς ἀθήν δώμαθ', αἱ δ' ἐπὶ ρροθα,  
καὶ ταῦτ' ἐπειδὴν εὐφρόνῃ ζεύξῃ μία  
χρεῶν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν.

The same play contains a fine choric passage upon the equality of human souls at birth, their after inequality through fortune :<sup>1</sup>—

ἐν φύλον ἀνθρώπων μὴ ἔδειξε πατὺρ καὶ μητὺρ ἡμᾶς  
ἀμέρα τοὺς πάντας· οὐδεὶς ἔξοχος ἄλλος ἔβλασταν ἄλλου.  
βόσκει δὲ τοὺς μὲν μοῖρα δυσμερίας τοὺς δ' ὀλβος ἡμῶν  
τοὺς δὲ δουλείας ζυγὸν ἔσχεν ἀνάγκας.

The  
*Tyndareus.*

Among the fragments that deal with the commonplaces of Greek tragedy, the following, from the *Tyndareus*, may be cited as a brilliant expression of the Solonian proverb :<sup>2</sup>—

οὐ χρεὶ ποτ' εὖ πρᾶσσοντος ὀλβίωαι τύχας  
ἀνδρὸς πρὶν αὐτῷ παντελῶς ἦδη βίος  
διεκπερανθῇ καὶ τελευτήσῃ βίον.  
ἐν γὰρ βραχεὶ καθεῖλε κῶλίγῃ χρόνῳ  
πάμπλουτον ὀλβον δαίμονος κακοῦ δόσις,  
ὅταν μεταστῇ καὶ θεοῖς δοκῇ τάδε.

The *Scyrian*  
*Women.*

A play called the *Scyrian Women* furnishes two excellent

---

Far from our household gods, from parents far ;  
Some to strange husbands, to barbarians some,  
To homes uncouth, to houses foul with shame.  
Yea, let but one night yoke us, all these things  
Must needs forthwith be praised and held for fair."

<sup>1</sup> "Of one race and common lineage all men at the hour of birth  
From the womb are issued equal, sons alike of mother earth ;  
But our lots how diverse ! Some are nursed by fortune harsh and rude  
Some by gentle ease, while others bare their necks to servitude."

<sup>2</sup> "To call that man who prospers truly happy  
Were vain before his life be wholly done ;  
For in short time and swift great wealth and puissance  
Have fallen by the dower of fate malign,  
When fortune veers and thus the gods decree."

apophthegmatic passages upon the misery of old age and the inutility of mourning: <sup>1</sup>—

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλγος οἶον ἢ πολλὴ ζῆη.  
 πάντ' ἐμπέφυκε τῷ μακρῷ γήρᾳ κακὰ,  
 νοῦς φροῦδος ἐργ' ἀχρεία φροντίδες κεναί.  
 ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἦν κλαίουσιν ἰᾶσθαι κακὰ  
 καὶ τὸν θανόντα δακρύοις ἀνιστάναι,  
 ὁ χρυσὸς ἦσσαν κτῆμα τοῦ κλαίειν ἂν ἦν.  
 νῦν δ' ὧ γεραῖε ταῦτ' ἀνηνύτως ἔχει  
 τὸν μὲν τάφῳ κρυφθέντα πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἄγειν.  
 κάμοι γὰρ ἂν πατήρ γε δακρύων χάριν  
 ἀνῆκτ' ἂν εἰς φῶς.

Two lines from a lost play on the tale of Odysseus illustrate the celebrated pun of Ajax on his own name: <sup>2</sup>— Gnomic  
verses.

ὀρθῶς δ' Ὀδυσσεύς εἰμ' ἐπώνυμος κακοῖς.  
 πολλοὶ γὰρ ὠδύσαντο δυσσεβεῖς ἐμοί.

In conclusion, a few single lines or couplets may be strung together for their proverbial pithiness and verbal delicacy: <sup>3</sup>—

ἐνεστι γάρ τις καὶ λόγοισιν ἡδονὴ  
 λήθην ὅταν ποιῶσι τῶν ὄντων κακῶν.

<sup>1</sup> "There is no trouble worse than length of life.  
 Old age hath all the ills that flesh is heir to—  
 Vain thoughts and powerless deeds and vanished mind."

"If mourners by their cries could cure our misery.  
 If tears could raise the dead to life again,  
 Gold would be valueless compared with crying.  
 But now, old man, these sorrows nought avail  
 To bring to light him whom the grave hath covered;  
 Else had my father, too, by grace of tears,  
 The day revisited."

The second of these extracts finds a close echo in some beautiful lines on the inutility of tears by Philemon (*Sardius*, fr. 1).

<sup>2</sup> "Rightly do bad men call my name Odysseus,  
 For ill folk odious insults heap upon me."

<sup>3</sup> "Even in words there is a pleasure, when  
 They bring forgetfulness of present woes."

τὸ μὴ γὰρ εἶναι κρεῖσσον ἢ τὸ ζῆν κακῶς.  
 πόνου μεταλλαχθέντος οἱ πόνοι γλυκεῖς.  
 εἰ σῶμα δοῦλον ἀλλ' ὁ νοῦς ἐλεύθερος.  
 ὅρκους ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς ὕδωρ γράφω.  
 ὦ θνητὸν ἀνδρῶν καὶ ταλαίπωρον γένος·  
 ὥς οὐδέν ἐσμεν, πλὴν σκιαῖς εἰκότες,  
 βάρος περισσὸν γῆς ἀναστρωφόμενοι.  
 θάρσει, γίνοι· τὰ πολλὰ τῶν δεινῶν ὄναρ  
 πνεύσαντα νυκτὸς ἡμέρας μαλάσσεται.  
 τὰ μὲν διδακτὰ μανθάνω, τὰ δ' εὐρετὰ  
 ζητῶ, τὰ δ' εὐκτὰ παρὰ θεῶν ᾗτησάμην.

Advent of  
Euripides.

Whenever we compare Euripides with his predecessors, we are led to remark that he disintegrated the drama by destroying its artistic unity and revealing the *modus operandi* of the scientific analyst. All the elements of a great poem were given as it were in their totality by Æschylus. Sophocles, while conscious of the effect to be gained by resolving the drama into its component parts, was careful to recombine them by his art. It is difficult with either Æschylus or Sophocles to separate a passage from its context without injuring the whole, or to understand the drift of a sentence without considering both circumstance and person. With Euripides the case is somewhat different. Though he composed dramas supremely good in the aggregate impression left upon our mind, we feel that he employed his genius with

"'Tis better not to be than to live badly."

"When toil has been well finished, toils are sweet."

"Enslave the body—still the soul is free."

"The oaths of women I on water write."

"O mortals, wretched creatures of a day,  
 How truly are we nought but like to shadows  
 Rolling superfluous weight of earth around!"

"Take courage, lady: many fearful things  
 That breathed dark dreams in night, by day are solaced."

"What may be taught, I learn; what may be found,  
 I seek; from Heaven I ask what may be prayed for."

delight in perfecting each separate part regarded by itself alone. So much of time and talent might be spent on the elaboration of the plot, so much on the accentuation of the characters, so much on lyric poetry, so much on moral maxims, so much on description, and so much on artificial argument. There is something overstrained in this crude statement; yet it serves to indicate the analytic method noticeable in Euripides. It consequently happened that his plays lent themselves admirably to the scissors and paste-box method of the compilers. He was a master of gnomes and sentences, and his tragedies were ready-made repertoires of quotations. The good cause and the better were pleaded in his dialogues with impartial skill, because it was the poet's aim to set forth what might be said rhetorically, because he took a lively interest in casuistry for its own sake. These qualities, combined with so much that is attractive in his fables, radiant in his fancy, tender in his human sympathy, and romantic in his conduct of a play, endeared him to the Greeks of all succeeding ages. What they wanted in dramatic poetry he supplied better than any other playwright, except perhaps Menander, who, for similar reasons, shared a similar exceptionally lucky fate. The result is that, besides possessing at least eighteen of the plays of Euripides, as against seven of Sophocles and seven of Æschylus, our anthology of Euripidean excerpts is voluminous in the same ratio. The majority of these we owe to the industry of Stobæus, who always found something to his purpose in a drama of Euripides, while collecting wise precepts and descriptive passages to illustrate the nature of a vice or virtue. We must be careful, amid the medley of sentiments expressed with equal force and equal ease, to remember that they are not the poet's own, but put into the mouth of his dramatic personages. What is peculiar is the impartiality of rhetorical treatment they display—a quality which, though it may not justify, accounts for the Aristophanic hostility to the Euripidean school of talkers on all subjects.

The senten-  
tious poet  
and the  
rhetorician.

Portions  
of the  
*Phaëthon*,  
*Erechtheus*,  
*Antiope*.

In addition to fragments, there remain detached portions of the *Phaëthon*, the *Erechtheus*, and the *Antiope*, sufficient, if nothing else had been preserved of the Euripidean drama, to suggest a better notion of this poet and his style than of Ion or Achæus, his lost compeers in the Alexandrian Canon. From the catastrophe of the *Phaëthon*, for example, it appears that Euripides contrived a truly striking contrast between the reception of the dead youth's corpse into the palace by his mother, and the advent, immediately following, of his father with a Chorus chanting bridal hymns. Lycurgus the orator, quoting the *Erechtheus*, has transmitted a characteristic speech by Praxithea, who deserves to be added to the list of courageous women painted with the virtues of *εὐψυχία* (high spirit) by Euripides. She maintains that, just as she would gladly send forth sons in the face of death to fight for their country, so, when the State requires of her the sacrifice of a daughter, she would be ashamed to refuse this much and far more. The outlines of the *Antiope* are more blurred; yet enough survives of a dialectical contention between Zethus and Amphion, the one arguing for a life of study and culture, the other for a life of arms and action, to illustrate this phase of the master's manner. With regard to the *Phaëthon*, it should be mentioned that Goethe attempted its restitution. His essay may be studied with interest by those who seek to understand the German poet's method of approaching the antique. The reverence with which he handles the precious relics may possibly astonish scholars, who, through fastidiousness of taste, have depreciated a dramatist they imperfectly comprehend.<sup>1</sup> English literature can now boast its own *Erechtheus*, restored by Swinburne on the model of Æschylus rather than Euripides. While referring to the mutilated dramas of Euripides, the opening to the *Danaë* requires a passing word of comment. It consists of a prologue in the mouth of Hermes, a Chorus, and a couple

<sup>1</sup> See Goethe, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 1840, vol. xxxiii. pp. 22-43.

of lines spoken by Acrisius. The whole, however, is pretty clearly the work of some mediæval forger, and has, so far as it goes, the same kind of interest as the *Χριστὸς πάσχω* (Christ's Passion), because it illustrates the ascendancy of Euripides during the later ages of Greek culture.

Irksome as it may be to both writer and reader, I know no better method of dealing with the fragments of Euripides than that already adopted with regard to those of Sophocles. The fragments themselves are precious, and deserve to be presented to the modern student with loving and reverential care. Yet there is no way of centralising the interest of their miscellaneous topics; and to treat them as an anthology of quotations, selecting the most characteristic and translating these as far as possible into equivalent lines, is all that I can do. Splintered fragments.

A peculiarly interesting fragment in its bearing on Greek life shall be chosen for the first quotation. It comes from the satyric drama of *Autolycus*, and expresses the contempt felt by cultivated Athenians for young men who devoted all their energies to gymnastics. It is not easy to connect the idea of vulgarity with that of the Greek athletes whose portraits in marble, no less resplendent than the immortal Apoxyomenos of the Vatican, adorned the peristyles of Altia. Yet there can be little doubt from the following fragment, taken in connection with certain hints in Plato, that these muscular heroes of an hour, for whom wreaths were woven and breaches broken in the city walls, struck some green-eyed philosophers as the incarnation of rowdyism. Euripides, if we may trust his biographers, had been educated by his father as an athlete; and it is not improbable that his early distaste for an eminently uncongenial occupation, no less than his familiarity with the manners of its professors, embittered his style in this sarcastic passage. Such splendid beings as the Autolycus, before whom the distinguished guests in Xenophon's Symposium were silenced, seemed to our poet Greek athletes satirised in the *Autolycus*.

at best but sculptor's models, walking statues, πόλεως ἀγάλματα (town-ornaments), and at worst mere slaves of jaws and belly, περισσαὶ σαρκές (hypertrophies of flesh). Early in Greek literature the same relentless light of moral science, like the gaze of Apollonius undoing Lamia's charm, had been cast upon the athletes by Xenophanes of Colophon.<sup>1</sup> While listening to Euripides, we can fancy that the Adikos Logos from the *Clouds* of Aristophanes is speaking through his lips to an Athenian audience, composed of would-be orators and assiduous dikasts :<sup>2</sup>—

κακῶν γὰρ ὄντων μυρίων καθ' Ἑλλάδα,  
οὐδὲν κάκιον ἐστὶν ἀθλητῶν γένους.  
οἱ πρῶτα μὲν ζῆν οὔτε μανθάνουσιν εἶδ',  
οὔτ' ἂν δύναιτο· πῶς γὰρ ὅστις ἐστ' ἀνὴρ  
γνάθου τε δοῦλος νηδὺς θ' ἡσσημένος,  
κτῆσαιτ' ἂν ὄλβον εἰς ὑπερβολὴν πατρός ;  
οὐδ' αὖ πένεσθαι καὶ ξυνηρετμεῖν τύχαις  
οἰοί τ'· ἔθη γὰρ οὐκ ἐθισθέντες καλὰ  
σκληρῶς διαλλάσσουν εἰς τὰμήχανα.  
λαμπροὶ δ' ἐν ἡβῃ καὶ πόλεως ἀγάλματα  
φοιτῶσ'· ὅταν δὲ προσπέσῃ γῆρας πικρὸν  
τρίβωνες ἐκβαλόντες οἷχονται κρόκας.

<sup>1</sup> The passage alluded to above is No. 19 of the fragments of Xenophanes. It consists of eleven elegiac couplets, in which the philosopher asserts his own superiority to the winners of wreaths at Olympia and elsewhere, severely blaming the Greeks for not recognising that "the wisdom we profess is more excellent than the strength of men or horses."

<sup>2</sup> "Of all the thousand ills that prey on Hellas  
Not one is greater than the tribe of athletes ;  
For, first, they never learn how to live well,  
Nor indeed could they ; seeing that a man,  
Slave to his jaws and belly, cannot hope  
To heap up wealth superior to his sire's.  
How to be poor and row in fortune's boat  
They know no better ; for they have not learned  
Manners that make men proof against ill luck.  
Lustrous in youth, they lounge like living statues  
Decking the streets ; but when sad old age comes,  
They fall and perish like a threadbare coat.



ἐμεψάμην δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἑλλήνων νόμον  
 οἱ τῶνδ' ἑκατὶ σύλλογον ποιούμενοι  
 τιμῶσ' ἀχρεῖους ἡδονὰς δαιτὺς χάριν.  
 τίς γὰρ παλαίσας εὖ, τίς ὠκύπους ἀνὴρ  
 ἢ δίσκον ἄρας ἢ γνάθον παίσας καλῶς  
 πόλει πατρὶα στέφανον ἤρκεσεν λαβών;  
 πότερα μαχοῦνται πολεμίοισιν ἐν χεροῖν  
 δίσκους ἔχοντες ἢ δι' ἀσπίδων χερὶ  
 θείοντες ἐκβαλοῦσι πολεμίους πάτρας;  
 οὐδεὶς σιδήρου ταῦτα μωραίνει πέλας  
 στάς. ἀνδρας οὖν ἐχρὴν σοφούς τε κάγαθοὺς  
 φύλλοις στέφεσθαι, χῶστις ἡγείται πόλει  
 κάλλιστα, σῶφρων καὶ δίκαιος ὦν ἀνὴρ,  
 ὅστις τε μύθοις ἔργ' ἀπαλλάσσει κακὰ  
 μάχας τ' ἀφαιρῶν καὶ στάσεις· τοιαῦτα γάρ  
 πόλει τε πάσῃ πᾶσί θ' Ἑλλήσιν καλά.

Passing from the athletes to a cognate subject, the following fragment from the *Dictys* nobly expresses the ideal of friendship. The first two lines seem to need correction; I have let them stand, though inclined to propose *κεῖ* for *καὶ*, and to conjecture the loss of a line after the second:<sup>1</sup>—

Friendship  
 in the *Dictys*.

φίλος γὰρ ἦν μοι· καὶ μ' ἔρωσ' ἔλοι ποτὲ  
 οὐκ εἰς τὸ μῶρον οὐδέ μ' εἰς Κῦπριν τρέπων.

I've often blamed the customs of us Hellenes,  
 Who for the sake of such men meet together  
 To honour idle sport and feed our fill;  
 For who, I pray you, by his skill in wrestling,  
 Swiftmess of foot, good boxing, strength at quoits,  
 Has served his city by the crown he gains?  
 Will they meet men in fight with quoits in hand,  
 Or in the press of shields drive forth the foeman  
 By force of fisticuffs from hearth and home?  
 Such follies are forgotten face to face  
 With steel. We therefore ought to crown with wreaths  
 Men wise and good, and him who guides the State,  
 A man well-tempered, just, and sound in counsel,  
 Or one who by his words averts ill deeds,  
 Warding off strife and warfare; for such things  
 Bring honour on the city and all Hellenes."

<sup>1</sup> "He was my friend; and may love lead me never  
 Aside to folly or to sensual joy!"

ἀλλ' ἔστι δὴ τις ἄλλος ἐν βροτοῖς ἔρως,  
 ψυχῆς δικαίας σώφρονός τε κάγαθῆς.  
 καὶ χρῆν δὲ τοῖς βροτοῖσι τόνδ' εἶναι νόμον,  
 τῶν εὐσεβούντων οὔτινές γε σώφρονες  
 ἔρῳ, Κύπριν δὲ τὴν Διὸς χαίρειν ἔαν.

Sentences  
on love.

About Erōs and Aphrodite the poet has supplied us with a good store of contradictory sentiments. In one long and very remarkable fragment (No. 839, ed. Dindorf) from an unknown play, Euripides, if he be indeed the author of the verses, has imitated Æschylus, taking almost word for word the famous vaunt of Kupris, quoted above from the *Danaïdes*. The three next pieces may be also cited among the praises of love :<sup>1</sup>—

ἔρωτα δ' ὅστις μὴ θεὸν κρίνει μέγαν  
 καὶ τῶν ἀπάντων δαιμόνων ὑπέρτατον,  
 ἧ σκαιός ἐστιν ἢ καλῶν ἅπειρος ὦν  
 οὐκ οἶδε τὸν μέγιστον ἀνθρώποις θεόν.

ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς ἔρωτα πίπτουσιν βροτῶν  
 ἐσθλῶν ὅταν τύχῳσι τῶν ἐρωμένων  
 οὐκ ἔσθ' ὁποίας λείπεται τόθ' ἡδονῆς.

---

Surely there is another sort of love  
 For a soul, just, well-tempered, strong, and good.  
 And there should be this law for mortal men,  
 To love the pure and temperate, and to leave  
 Kupris, the daughter of high Zeus, alone."

We find a witty contradiction to the sentiment of these lines in a fragment of Amphis (*Dithyrambus*, fr. 2):—

τί φης ; σὺ ταυτὶ προσδοκᾷς πείσειν ἐμ' ὥς  
 ἔρως τις ἐστὶν ὅστις ᾠραῖον φιλῶν  
 τρόπων ἱραστής ἐστι τὴν ὕψιν παρῆς ;  
 ἄφρων γ' ἄλθῳς.

- <sup>1</sup> "Whoso pretends that Love is no great god,  
 The lord and master of all deities,  
 Is either dull of soul, or, dead to beauty,  
 Knows not the greatest god that governs men."

*Augē*, 269.

"When it befalls poor mortal men to love,  
 Should they find worthy objects for their loving,  
 Then is there nothing left of joy to long for."

*Andromeda*, 147.

ἔχω δὲ τόλμης καὶ θράσους διδάσκαλον,  
 ἐν τοῖς ἀμηχάνουσιν εὐπορώτατον,  
 ἔρωτα πάντων δυσμαχώτατον θεῶν.

Here again, remembering how much the Greeks included in the term Music, is a pretty compliment :<sup>1</sup>—

μουσικὴν δ' ἄρα  
 ἔρωσ διδάσκει κἂν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρίν.

The next is a graceful expostulation on the lover's part with the god who can make or mar his happiness in life :<sup>2</sup>—

σὺ δ' ὦ τύραννε θεῶν τε κἀνθρώπων ἔρωσ  
 ἢ μὴ δίδασκε τὰ καλὰ φαίνεσθαι καλὰ,  
 ἢ τοῖς ἐρώσιν ὦν σὺ δημιουργὸς εἶ  
 μοχθοῦσι μόχθους εὐτυχῶς συνεκπώνει.  
 καὶ ταῦτα μὲν δρῶν τίμιος θεοῖς ἔσει,  
 μὴ δρῶν δ' ἵπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ διδάσκεισθαι φιλεῖν  
 ἀφαιρεθήσει χάριτας αἷς τιμῶσί σε.

Nor is this without its tincture of respect :<sup>3</sup>—

ἀνδρὸς δ' ὀρώντος εἰς κύπριν νεανίου  
 ἀφύλακτος ἢ τήρησις· ἦν γὰρ φαῦλος ἦ

“ Mine is a master of resolve and daring,  
 Filled with all craft to do impossible things,  
 Love, among gods the most unconquerable.”

*Hippolytus*, 431.

<sup>1</sup> “ Music, at least,  
 Love teaches men, unmusical before.”

*Sthenobæa*, 664.

<sup>2</sup> “ O Love, our lord, of gods and men the king,  
 Either teach not how beauteous beauty is,  
 Or help poor lovers, whom like clay thou mouldest,  
 Through toil and labour to a happy end.  
 Thus shalt thou gain high honour : otherwise  
 The loving lessons that men learn of thee,  
 Will rob thee of their worship and goodwill.”

*Andromeda*, 135.

<sup>3</sup> “ A young man with eyes turned to follow beauty  
 May not be governed : yea, though he be weak,

τάλλ' εἰς ἔρωτα πᾶς ἀνὴρ σοφώτερος.  
ἦν δ' αὖ προσῆται Κύπρις ἡδιστον λαβεῖν.

But Euripides can turn round and rate Love for his encouragement of idleness. There is a stern perception of the facts of life in the following excerpt from the *Danaë*:<sup>1</sup>—

ἔρως γὰρ ἀργὸν καπὶ τοῖς ἀργοῖς ἔφυ·  
φιλεῖ κάτοπτρα καὶ κομῆς ξανθίσματα,  
φεύγει δὲ μόχθους. ἔν δέ μοι τεκμήριον·  
οὐδεὶς προσαιτῶν βίοντον ἡράσθη βροτῶν,  
ἐν τοῖς δ' ἔχουσιν ἡβητῆς πέφυχ' ὄδε.

On women. Concerning women he is no less impartial. However he may have chosen to paint their possibilities of heroism, and the force of their character in hours of passion or of need, no poet has certainly abused them in stronger terms. The following is an almost laughable example:<sup>2</sup>—

δεινὴ μὲν ἀλκὴ κιμάτων θαλασσίῳν  
δυναὶ δὲ ποταμοῦ καὶ πυρὸς θερμοῦ πνοαὶ  
δεινὸν δὲ πενία δεινὰ δ' ἄλλα μυρία·  
ἀλλ' οὐδὲν οὕτω δεινὸν ὥς γυνὴ κακὸν  
οὐδ' ἂν γένοιτο γράμμα τοιοῦτ' ἐν γραφῇ  
οὐδ' ἂν λόγος δείξειεν· εἰ δέ του θεῶν

---

Yet is he wise and masterful for loving ;  
And when Love smiles, what boon surpasseth love ! "

*Antigone*, 161.

- <sup>1</sup> Love is a sluggard, and of sloth the twin :  
Mirrors and hair-dyes are his favourite toys ;  
Labour he shuns. I take this truth to witness :  
No beggar for his bread was known to Love,  
But with rich men his beauty-bloom abounds."

- <sup>2</sup> " Dire is the violence of ocean waves,  
And dire the blast of rivers and hot fire,  
And dire is want, and dire are countless things ;  
But nothing is so dire and dread as woman.  
No painting could express her dreadfulness,  
No words describe it. If a god made woman,

τόδ' ἐστὶ πλάσμα δημιουργὸς ὦν κακῶν  
μέγιστος ἴστω καὶ βροτοῖσι δυσμενής.

Nor can the group which I have classed together in the following extracts be considered as complimentary :<sup>1</sup>—

πλὴν τῆς τεκούσης θῆλυ πᾶν μισῶ γένος.

ἔνδον μένουσαν τὴν γυναῖκ' εἶναι χρεῶν  
ἐσθλὴν θύρασι δ' ἀξίαν τοῦ μηδενός.

ἔστιν δὲ μήτηρ φιλότεκνος μᾶλλον πατρός·  
ἢ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῆς οἶδεν ὄνθ' ὁ δ' οἶεται.

οὐκ ἔστιν οὔτε τείχος οὔτε χρήματα,  
οὔτ' ἄλλο δυσφύλακτον οὐδὲν ὥς γυνή.

ἀντὶ γὰρ πυρὸς  
πῦρ ἄλλο μίξον ἢ δὲ δυσμαχώτερον  
ἐβλαστον αἱ γυναῖκες.

γαμέϊτε νῦν γαμέϊτε κᾶτα θνήσκετε  
ἢ φαρμάκοισιν ἐκ γυναικὸς ἢ δόλοις.

And fashioned her, he was for men the artist  
Of woes unnumbered, and their deadly foe."

*Incert. Fab.* 880.

<sup>1</sup> "Saving my mother, I hate womankind."—*Meianippide*, 507.

"Good women must abide within the house :  
Those whom we meet abroad are nothing worth."

*Meleager*, 527.

"Mothers are fonder of their sons than fathers :  
For mothers know they're theirs, while fathers think it."

*Incert. Fab.* 883.

"There is no fort, there is no money-box,  
Nor aught besides, so hard to guard as woman."

*Danaë*, 323.

"Instead of fire,  
Another fire mightier and more invincible  
Is woman."

*Hippolytus*, 430.

"Marry, go to, yea, marry—and then die  
By poison at a woman's hand or wiles."

*Cretan Women*, 467.

On marriage. On marriage many pithy sayings might be cited. The one I take first is eminent for practical brutality combined with sound sense :<sup>1</sup>—

ὅσοι γαμοῦσι δ' ἢ γένει κρείσσους γάμους  
ἢ πολλὰ χρήματ' οὐκ ἐπίστανται γαμεῖν.  
τὰ τῆς γυναικὸς γὰρ κρατοῦντ' ἐν δώμασιν  
δουλοῖ τὸν ἄνδρα κοῦκέτ' ἐστ' ἐλεύθερος.  
πλούτος δ' ἐπακτὸς ἐκ γυναικείων γάμων  
ἀνόγητος· αἱ γὰρ διαλύσεις οὐ ῥαδίαι.

To the same category belongs the following, though its worldly wisdom conceals no bitterness :<sup>2</sup>—

κακὸν γυναῖκα πρὸς νέαν ζεῦξαι νέον·  
μακρὰ γὰρ ἰσχὺς μᾶλλον ἀρσένων μένει,  
θήλεια δ' ἥβη θᾶσσον ἐκλείπει δέμας.

It answers to our own proverb : “ A young man married is a young man marred.”

Domestic  
life.

For the sanctities of domestic life, and for the pathetic beauty of maternal love, no poet had a deeper sense than Euripides. The following lines, spoken apparently by Danaë, make us keenly regret the loss of the tragedy that bore her name ; all the tenderness of the Simonidean elegy upon her fable seems to inspire the maiden's longing for a child to fill her arms and sport upon her knee :—

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<sup>1</sup> “Those men who mate with women better born  
Or wed great riches, know not how to wed ;  
For when the woman's part doth rule the house,  
The man's a slave ; large dowers are worse than none,  
Seeing they make divorce more difficult.”

*Melanippide*, 513.

<sup>2</sup> “To mate a youth with a young wife is ill ;  
Seeing a man's strength lasteth, while the bloom  
Of beauty quickly leaves a woman's form.”

*Æolus*, 22.

τάχ' ἂν πρὸς ἀγκάλασι καὶ στέρνοις ἐμοῖς  
 πηδῶν ἀθύροι καὶ φιλημάτων ὄχλῳ  
 ψυχὴν ἐμὴν κτήσαιο· ταῦτα γὰρ βροτοῖς  
 φίλτρον μέγιστον αἱ ξυνοῦσαι, πάτερ.<sup>1</sup>

And where was the charm of children ever painted with  
 more feeling than in these verses from the same play ?<sup>2</sup>—

γύναι, φίλον μὲν φέγγος ἡλίου τόδε,  
 καλὸν δὲ πόντου χεῦμ' ἰδεῖν εὐήμεμον,  
 γῇ τ' ἡρινὸν θάλλουσα πλοῦσιόν θ' ὕδωρ,  
 πολλῶν τ' ἐπαινον ἐστὶ μοι λέξαι καλῶν.  
 ἀλλ' οὐδὲν οὕτω λαμπρὸν οὐδ' ἰδεῖν καλὸν  
 ὥς τοῖς ἄπαισι καὶ πόθῳ δεδηγμένοις  
 παίδων νεογνῶν ἐν δόμοις ἰδεῖν φάος.

In the next quotation, beautiful by reason of its plainness,  
 a young man is reminded of the sweetness of a mother's  
 love :<sup>3</sup>—

οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲν μητρὸς ἡδίων τέκνοις.  
 ἐρᾶτε μητρὸς, παῖδες· ὥς οὐκ ἔστ' ἔρω  
 τοιοῦτος ἄλλος οἷος ἡδίων ἐρᾶν.

The sentiment here expressed seems to be contradicted by  
 a fragment from an unknown play (No. 887), where a son tells  
 his mother that he cannot be expected to cling to her as

- <sup>1</sup> "He, leaping to my arms and in my bosom,  
 Might haply sport, and with a crowd of kisses  
 Might win my soul forth ; for there is no greater  
 Love-charm than close companionship, my father."

*Danaë*, 325.

- <sup>2</sup> "Lady, the sun's light to our eyes is dear,  
 And fair the tranquil reaches of the sea,  
 And flowery earth in May, and bounding waters ;  
 And so right many fair things I might praise ;  
 Yet nothing is so radiant and so fair  
 As for souls childless, with desire sore-smitten,  
 To see the light of babes about the house."—*Danaë*, 327.

- <sup>3</sup> "Nought is more dear to children than their mother.  
 Sons, love your mother ; for there is no love  
 Sweeter than this that can be loved by men."—*Erechtheus*, 370.

much as to his father. The Greeks, as we gather from the *Oresteia* of Æschylus, believed that the male offspring was specially related by sympathy, duty, and hereditary qualities to his father. The contrast between women and men in respect to the paternal home is well conveyed in the following four lines :<sup>1</sup>—

γυνή γὰρ ἐξελθοῦσα πατρώων δόμων  
οὐ τῶν τεκόντων ἐστὶν ἀλλὰ τοῦ λέχους·  
τὸ δ' ἄρσεν ἔστηκ' ἐν δόμοις αἰεὶ γένος  
θεῶν πατρώων καὶ τάφων τιμάορον.

The thought  
of death.

Some of the most remarkable excerpts from Euripides turn upon the thought of death—a doom accepted by him with magnanimous Greek stoicism. Those which appear to me the most important I have thrown together for convenience of comparison :<sup>2</sup>—

τίς δ' οἶδεν εἰ ζῆν τοῦθ' ὃ κέκληται θανεῖν,  
τὸ ζῆν δὲ θνήσκειν ἐστὶ; πλὴν ὅμως βροτῶν  
νοσοῦσιν οἱ βλέποντες οἱ δ' ὀλωλότες  
οὐδὲν νοσοῦσιν οὐδὲ κέκτηνται κακά.  
ἐχρῆν γὰρ ἡμᾶς σύλλογον ποιουμένους  
τὸν φύντα θρηνεῖν εἰς ὅσ' ἔρχεται κακά,  
τὸν δ' αὖ θανόντα καὶ πόνων πεπαυμένον  
χαίροντας εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν δόμων.

<sup>1</sup> "A woman, when she leaves her father's home,  
Belongs not to her parents, but her bed ;  
Men stay within the house, and stand for aye  
Avengeful guardians of its shrines and graves."

*Danaë*, 330.

<sup>2</sup> "Who knows if that be life which we call death,  
And life be dying?—save alone that men  
Living bear grief, but when they yield their breath  
They grieve no more and have no sorrow then."

*Incert. Fab.* 821.

"Twere well for men, when first a babe draws breath,  
To meet and wail the woes that he must bear ;  
But to salute the soul that rests from care  
With songs and pæans on the path of death."

*Cresphontes*, 454.



τοὺς ζῶντας εὖ δρᾶν· καθανὼν δὲ πᾶς ἀνὴρ  
γῇ καὶ σκιά· τὸ μηδὲν εἰς οὐδὲν ῥέπει.

θάνατος γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νεικέων τέλος  
ἔχει· τί γὰρ τοῦδ' ἐστὶ μείζον ἐν βροτοῖς;  
τίς γὰρ πετραῖον σκόπελον οὐτάζων δορὶ  
ὀδύναισι δώσει; τίς δ' ἀτιμάζων νέκυς,  
εἰ μηδὲν αἰσθάνοιντο τῶν παθημάτων;

To these should be added the magnificent words of consolation addressed by Dictys, in the tragedy that bears his name, to Danaë: <sup>1</sup>—

δοκεῖς τὸν Ἀἰδην σῶν τι φροντίζειν γόων  
καὶ παῖδ' ἀνῆσειν τὸν σὸν εἰ θέλοις στένειν;  
παῖσαι· βλέπουσα δ' εἰς τὰ τῶν πέλας κακὰ  
ῥάων γένοι' ἂν, εἰ λογίζεσθαι θέλοις  
ὅσοι τε δεσμοῖς ἐκμεμόχθηται βροτῶν,  
ὅσοι τε γηράσκουσιν ὄρφανοὶ τέκνων,  
τούς τ' ἐκ μεγίστης ὀλβίας τυραννίδος  
τὸ μηδὲν ὄντας· ταῦτά σε σκοπεῖν χρεών.

"Let those who live do right ere death descendeth;  
The dead are dust; mere nought to nothing tendeth."  
*Meleager*, 537.

"In death there dwells the end of human strife;  
For what 'mid men than death is mightier?  
Who can inflict pain on the stony scour  
By wounding it with spear-point? Who can hurt  
The dead, when dead men have no sense of suffering?"  
*Antigone*, 160.

"Think'st thou that Death will heed thy tears at all,  
Or send thy son back if thou wilt but groan?  
Nay, cease; and, gazing at thy neighbour's grief,  
Grow calm: if thou wilt take the pains to reckon  
How many have toiled out their lives in bonds,  
How many wear to old age, robbed of children,  
And all who from the tyrant's height of glory  
Have sunk to nothing. These things should'st thou heed."  
*Dictys*, 334.

Fortitude. Close to the thought of death lies that of endurance ; and here is a fragment from the *Hypsipyle*, which might be placed for a motto on the title-page of *Epictetus*.<sup>1</sup>—

ἔφν μὲν οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ πονεῖ βροτῶν,  
θάπτει τε τέκνα χᾶτερ' αὖ κτᾶται νέα,  
αὐτὸς τε θνήσκει, καὶ τὰδ' ἄχθονται βροτοὶ  
εἰς γῆν φέροντες γῆν· ἀναγκαίως δ' ἔχει  
βίον θερίζειν ὥστε κάρπιμον στάχυν,  
καὶ τὸν μὲν εἶναι τὸν δὲ μὴ· τί ταῦτα δεῖ  
στένειν, ἅπερ δεῖ κατὰ φύσιν διεκπερᾶν ;  
δεινὸν γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶν ἀναγκαίων βροτοῖς.

Justice. On Justice and the punishment of sins we may take the following passages, expressing, with dramatic energy, the intense moral conscience of the Greek race :<sup>2</sup>—

δοκεῖτε πηδᾶν τὰδικήματ' εἰς θεοὺς  
πτεροῦσι, κᾶπειτ' ἐν Διὸς δέλτου πτυχαῖς  
γράφειν τιν' αὐτὰ, Ζῆνα δ' εἰσορῶντά νιν  
θνητοῖς δικάζειν ; οὐδ' ὁ πᾶς ἂν οὐρανὸς  
Διὸς γράφοντος τὰς βροτῶν ἁμαρτίας  
ἐξαρκέσειεν, οὐδ' ἐκεῖνος ἂν σκοπῶν  
πέμπειν ἐκάστω ζημίαν· ἀλλ' ἡ Δίκη  
ἐνταῦθά πού 'στιν ἐγγὺς εἰ βούλεσθ' ὁρᾶν.

1 "No man was ever born who did not suffer.  
He buries children, then begets new sons,  
Then dies himself : and men forsooth are grieved  
Consigning dust to dust. Yet needs must be  
Lives should be garnered like ripe harvest-sheaves,  
And one man live, another perish. Why  
Mourn over that which nature puts upon us ?  
Nought that must be is terrible to mortals."—*Hypsipyle*, {752.

2 "Think you that sins leap up to heaven aloft  
On wings, and then that on Jove's red-leaved tablets  
Some one doth write them, and Jove looks at them  
In judging mortals ? Not the whole broad heaven,  
If Jove should write our sins, would be enough,  
Nor he suffice to punish them. But Justice  
Is here, is somewhere near us ; do but look."

τὴν τοι Δίκην λέγουσι παῖδ' εἶναι Διὸς  
ἐγγύς τε ναίειν τῆς βροτῶν ἀμαρτίας.

They stand, however, in somewhat curious opposition to a fragment from *Bellerophon* about Divine Justice :<sup>1</sup>—

Sophistic  
treatment of  
Justice in  
the *Bellero-*  
*phon*.

φησὶν τις εἶναι δῆτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ θεούς ;  
οὐκ εἰσὶν, οὐκ εἰσ'. εἰ τις ἀνθρώπων λέγει,  
μὴ τῷ παλαιῷ μῦθος ὦν χρήσθω λόγῳ.  
σκέψασθε δ' αὐτὰ μὴ 'πὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς λόγοις  
γνώμην ἔχοντες· φημ' ἐγὼ τυραννίδα  
κτείνειν τε πλείστους κτημάτων τ' ἀποστερεῖν,  
ὄρκους τε παραβαίνοντας ἐκπορθεῖν πόλεις,  
καὶ ταῦτα δρῶντες μᾶλλον εἰς εὐδαίμονες  
τῶν εὐσεβούντων ἡσυχῇ καθ' ἡμέραν·  
πόλεις τε μικρὰς οἶδα τιμώσας θεοὺς  
αἱ μειζόνων κλύουσι δυσσεβεστέρων  
λόγχης ἀριθμῷ πλείονος κρατούμεναι.

In which of the fragments just quoted was the poet speaking in his own person? In neither, perhaps, fully; partly, perhaps, in both. About wealth he utters in like manner seemingly contradictory oracles :<sup>2</sup>—

βίαν νιν ἔλκετ' ὦ κακοὶ τιμὰς βροτοῖ  
καὶ κτᾶσθε πλοῦτον πάντοθεν θηρώμενοι

---

"Justice, they say, is daughter of high Jove,  
And dwells hard by to human sinfulness."—*Alopé*, 149.

<sup>1</sup> "Doth some one say that there be gods above?  
There are not; no, there are not. Let no fool,  
Led by the old false fable, thus deceive you.  
Look at the facts themselves, yielding my words  
No undue credence: for I say that kings  
Kill, rob, break oaths, lay cities waste by fraud,  
And doing thus are happier than those  
Who live calm pious lives day after day.  
How many little States that serve the gods  
Are subject to the godless but more strong,  
Made slaves by might of a superior army!"

*Bellerophon*, 293.

<sup>2</sup> "Go to now, O ye bad men, heap up honours  
By force, get wealth, hunting it whence ye can,

σύμμικτα μὴ δίκαια καὶ δίκαι' ὁμοῦ ·  
ἔπειτ' ἀμᾶσθε τῶνδε δύστηνον θέρος.

ὦ χρυσέ, δεξίωμα κάλλιστον βροτοῖς,  
ὥς οὔτε μήτηρ ἡδονὰς τοιάσδ' ἔχει  
οὐ παῖδες ἀνθρώπουσιν οὐ φίλος πατήρ,  
οἷας σὺ χοῖ σέ δώμασιν κεκτημένοι.  
εἰ δ' ἡ Κύπρις τοιοῦτον ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄρῃ  
οὐ θαῦμ' ἔρωτας μυρίους αὐτὴν τρέφειν.

On noble  
blood.

In what he says of noble birth Euripides never wavers.  
The true democrat speaks through his verse, and yet no poet  
has discoursed more enthusiastically upon bravery and honour.  
We may take the following examples in their order : <sup>1</sup>—

εἰς δ' εὐγένειαν ὀλίγ' ἔχω φράσαι καλά ·  
ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐσθλὸς εὐγενὴς ἔμοιγ' ἀνὴρ  
ὁ δ' οὐ δίκαιος κἂν ἀμείνωνος πατρὸς  
Ζητὸς πεφύκεν δυσγενὴς εἶναι δοκεῖ.  
ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως σκοπεῖν χρῶν  
τὴν εὐγένειαν · τοὺς γὰρ ἀνδρείους φύσιν  
καὶ τοὺς δικαίους τῶν κενῶν δοξασμάτων  
κἂν ὦσι δούλων εὐγενεστέρους λέγω.

---

By indiscriminate armfuls, right and wrong ;  
Then reap of all these things the wretched harvest."

*Iso*, 420.

"Gold ! of all welcome blessings thou'rt the best !  
For never had a mother's smile for men,  
Nor son, nor father dear, such perfect charm,  
As thou and they who hold thee for their guest.  
If Kupris darts such glamour from her gaze,  
No wonder that she breeds a myriad loves !"

*Bellerophon*, 288.

<sup>1</sup> "For mere high birth I have small meed of praise :  
The good man in my sight is nobly born ;  
While he who is not righteous, though his sire  
Than Zeus be loftier, seems to me but base."

*Dictys*, 341.

"I know not how to think of noble blood :  
For men of courage and of virtuous soul,  
Though born of slaves, are far above vain titles."

*Melanippide*, 496.

φεῦ τοῖσι γενναίοισιν ὡς ἀπανταχοῦ  
πρέπει χαρακτήρ χρηστὸς εἰς εὐψυχίαν.

ἅπας μὲν ἀὴρ αἰετῷ περάσιμος  
ἅπασα δὲ χθὼν ἀνδρὶ γενναίῳ πατρίς.

Further to illustrate his conception of true nobility, using for this purpose in particular the fragments of the *Antiope*, would be easy. It appears throughout that Euripides was bent on contrasting the honour that is won by labour with the pleasures of a lazy life. Against the hedonism which lay so near at hand to pagans in the licence of the flesh, the Greeks set up an ideal of glory attainable alone by toil. This morality found expression in the famous lines of Hesiod on ἀρετή (virtue, excellence of manhood), in the action of Achilles, in the proverb πάντα τὰ καλὰ χαλεπά (all things fair are hard to win), and in the fable of the Choice of Hercules. Euripides varies the theme in his iambs by a hundred modulations :<sup>1</sup>—

The nobility  
of arduous  
endeavour.

νεανίαν γὰρ ἄνδρα χρὴ τολμῶν αἰεῖ·  
οὐδείς γάρ ὦν ῥάθυμος εὐκλεῆς ἀνὴρ.  
ἀλλ' οἱ πόνοι τίκτουσι τὴν εὐδοξίαν.

οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις ἡδέως ζητῶν βιοῦν  
εὐκλειαν εἰσεκτήσατ' ἀλλὰ χρὴ πονεῖν.

"Lo, in all places how the nobly born  
Show their good breed and spirit by brave bearing!"  
*Danaë*, 328.

"The whole wide ether is the eagle's way :  
The whole earth is a brave man's fatherland."  
*Incert. Frag.* 866.

<sup>1</sup> "A young man should be always doing, daring ;  
For no slack heart or hand was ever famous.  
'Tis toil and danger that beget fair fame."  
*Archelaus*, 23?.

"Who seeks to lead a life of unstirred pleasure  
Cannot win fame : fame is the meed of travail."  
*Ibid.* 234.

ὁ δ' ἡδὺς αἰὼν ἢ κακὴ τ' ἀνανδρία  
οὐτ' οἶκον οὔτε γαίαν ὀρθώσκειν ἄν.

σὺν μυρίοις τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται πόνοις.

ἔμὲ δ' ἄρ' οὐ  
μοχθεῖν δίκαιον ; τίς δ' ἄμοχθος εὐκλείης ;  
τίς τῶν μεγίστων δειλὸς ὧν ὠρέξατο ;

Political  
ethics.

The political morality deduced from this view of life is  
stern and noble : <sup>1</sup>—

γνώμη γὰρ ἀνδρὸς εὖ μὲν οἰκοῦνται πόλεις,  
εὖ δ' οἶκος, εἷς τ' αὖ πόλεμον ἰσχύει μέγα·  
σοφὸν γὰρ ἐν βούλευμα τὰς πολλὰς χέρας  
νικᾷ· σὺν ὅλῳ δ' ἀμαθία πλείστον κακόν.

τρῆς εἰσὶν ἀρεταὶ τὰς χρεῶν σ' ἀσκεῖν, τέκνον,  
θεοὺς τε τιμᾶν τοὺς τε φύσαντας γονεῖς,  
νόμους τε κοινοὺς Ἑλλάδος· καὶ ταῦτα δρῶν  
κάλλιστον ἔξεις στέφανον εὐκλείας ἀεὶ.

"A life of pleasure and unmanly sloth  
Could never raise a house or State to honour."

*Archelaus*, 235.

"Fair honour is the child of countless toils."

*Ibid.* 236.

"Is it not right that I  
Should toil ? Without toil who was ever famous ?  
What slothful soul ever desired the highest ?"

*Ibid.* 238.

"'Tis judgment that administers the State,  
The household, and in war of force is found ;  
For one wise word in season hath more strength  
Than many hands. Crowds and no brains breed ruin."

*Antiope*, 205.

"There are three virtues to observe, my son :  
Honour the gods, the parents that begot you,  
The laws that govern Hellas. Follow these,  
And you will win the fairest crown of honour."

*Ibid.* 221.

Nor is the condemnation of mere pleasure-seeking less severe :<sup>1</sup>—

Condemnation of hedonism.

ἀνὴρ γὰρ ὅστις εὖ βίον κεκτημένος  
τὰ μὲν κατ' οἴκους ἀμελία παρείς ἔῃ,  
μολπαῖσι δ' ἥσθεις τοῦτ' ἀεὶ θηρεύεται,  
ἀργὸς μὲν οἴκοις καὶ πόλει γενήσεται  
φίλοισι δ' οὐδεὶς· ἡ φύσις γὰρ οἷχεται  
ὅταν γλυκείας ἡδονῆς ἥσσω τὶς ᾗ.

The indifference induced by satiety is well characterised in the following lines :<sup>2</sup>—

κόρος δὲ πάντων· καὶ γὰρ ἐκ καλλιόνων  
λέκτροις ἐπ' αἰσχροῖς εἶδον ἐκπεπληγμένους.  
δαιτὸς δὲ πληρωθεὶς τις ἄσμενος πάλιν  
φαύλη διαίτη προσβαλὼν ἥσθη στόμα.

In the foregoing specimens no selection has been made of lines remarkable for their æsthetic beauty. This omission is due to Stobæus, who was more bent on extracting moral maxims than strains of poetry comparable with the invocation of Hippolytus to Artemis. Two, however, I have marked for translation on account of their artistic charm ; the first for its pretty touch of picturesqueness, the second for its sympathy with sculpture :<sup>3</sup>—

Lines of poetic beauty.

πολὺς δ' ἀνείρπε κισσὸς εὐφυῆς κλάδος  
χελιδόνων μουσεῖον.

<sup>1</sup> "The man who, when the goods of life abound,  
Casts to the winds economy, and spends  
His days in seeking after feast and song,  
At home and in the State will be a drone,  
And to his friends be nothing. Character  
Is, for the slaves of honeyed pleasure, gone."—*Antiope*, 196.

<sup>2</sup> "There is satiety of all things. Men  
Desert fair wives to dote on ugly women ;  
With rich meat surfeited, they gladly turn  
To humble fare, and find fresh appetite."—*Ibid.* 187.

<sup>3</sup> "Much ivy crept around, a comely growth,  
The tuneful haunt of swallows."—*Alcmene*, 91.

ἔα· τίν' ὄχθον τόνδ' ὀρῶ περίρρυτον  
 ἄφρω θαλάσσης, παρθένου τ' εἰκὼ τινα  
 ἐξ αὐτομόρφων λαῖνων τειχισμάτων  
 σοφῆς ἀγαλμα χειρός.

Gnomic  
 sentences.

Some passages, worthy of preservation, yet not easily classified, may wind up the series. Here is "Envy, eldest born of hell":<sup>1</sup>—

τίς δ'ρα μήτηρ ἢ πατὴρ κακὸν μέγα  
 βροτοῖς ἔφυσε τὸν δυσώνυμον φθόνον ;  
 ποῦ καὶ ποτ' οἰκεῖ σωματῶν λαχὼν μέρος ;  
 ἐν χερσὶν ἢ σπλάγχνοισιν ἢ παρ' ὀμματα  
 ἔσθ' ἡμῖν ; ὥς ἦν μόχθος ἰατροῖς μέγας  
 τομαῖς ἀφαιρεῖν ἢ ποτοῖς ἢ φαρμάκοις  
 πασῶν μεγίστην τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις νόσων.

The next couplet is pregnant with a home-truth which most men have had occasion to feel :<sup>2</sup>—

ἅπαντές ἐσμεν εἰς τὸ νουθετεῖν σοφοὶ  
 αὐτοὶ δ' ὅταν σφαλῶμεν οὐ γιγνώσκομεν.

The value attached by Greek political philosophers to the

"What! Do I see a rock with salt sea-foam  
 Surrounded, and the image of a maiden  
 Carved from the stony bastions nature-wrought  
 By some wise workman's craft!"

*Andromeda*, 127.

<sup>1</sup> "What mother or what father got for men  
 That curse unutterable, odious envy?  
 Where dwells it? In what member lies its lair?  
 Is it our hands, our entrails, or our eyes  
 That harbour it? Full ill would fare the leech  
 Who with the knife, or potions, or strong drugs,  
 Should seek to clear away this worst disease."

*Ino*, 418.

<sup>2</sup> "We all are wise for giving good advice,  
 But when we fail we have no wisdom left."

*Incert. Fab.* 862.



*ἦθος*, or temperament, of States, and their dislike of demagogy, are accounted for in these four lines :<sup>1</sup>—

τρόπος ἐστὶ χρηστὸς ἀσφαλέστερος νόμου.  
τὸν μὲν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἂν διαστρέψαι ποτὲ  
ρήτωρ δύναίτο, τὸν δ' ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω  
λόγοις ταρασσὼν πολλάκις λυμαίνεται.

One single line, noticeable for its weighty meaning, and Euripidean by reason of its pathos, shall end the list :<sup>2</sup>—

νέος πόνοις δέ γ' οὐκ ἀγύμναστος φρένας.

The lasting title to fame of Euripides consists in his having dealt with the deeper problems of life in a spirit which became permanent among the Greeks, so that his poems, like those of Menander, never lost their value as expressions of current philosophy. Nothing strikes the student of later Greek literature more strongly than this prolongation of the Euripidean tone of thought and feeling. In the decline of tragic poetry the literary sceptre was transferred to comedy, and the comic playwrights may be described as the true successors of Euripides. The dialectic method, degenerating into sophistic quibbling, which he affected, was indeed dropped, and a more harmonious form of art than the Euripidean was created for comedy by Menander, when the Athenians, after passing through their disputatious period, had settled down into a tranquil acceptance of the facts of life. Yet this return to harmony of form and purity of perception did not abate the influence of Euripides. Here and there throughout his tragedies he had said once and for all, and well said, what the Greeks were

Posthumous  
influence of  
Euripides.

<sup>1</sup> "Good ways of feeling are more safe than law :  
No rhetorician can upset the one ;  
The other he may tumble upside down  
With words, and do it often grievous wrong."

*Peirithous*, 598.

<sup>2</sup> "Young, but in spirit not untrained by trouble."

*Dictys*, 332.

bound to think and feel upon important matters, and his sensitive, susceptible temperament repeated itself over and over again among his literary successors. The exclamation of Philemon that, if he could believe in immortality, he would hang himself to see Euripides, is characteristic not only of Philemon but also of the whole Macedonian period of Greek literature.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST TRAGIC POETS

Apparent Accident in the Preservation of Greek Poetry—Criticism among the Ancients—Formation of Canons—Libraries—The Political Vicissitudes of Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople—Byzantine Scholarship in the Ninth Century—The Lost MS. of Menander—Tragic Fragments preserved by the Comic Poets and their Scholiasts; by Athenæus, by Stobæus—Aristotle—Tragedy before Æschylus—Fragments of Aristarchus—The *Medea* of Neophron—Ion—*The Games* of Achæus—Agathon—His Character for Luxurious Living—*The Flower*—Aristotle's Partiality for Agathon—The Family of Æschylus—Meletus and Plato among the Tragic Playwrights—The School of Sophocles—Influence of Euripides—Family of Carcinus—Tragedians ridiculed by Aristophanes—The *Sisyphus* of Critias—Cleophon—Cynical Tragedies ascribed to Diogenes—Extraordinary Fertility of the Attic Drama—The Repetition of Old Plots—Mamercus and Dionysius—Professional Rhetoricians appear as Playwrights—The School of Isocrates—The *Centaur* of Chærémon—His Style—The *Thermistocles* of Moschion—The Alexandrian Pleiad—The *Adonis* of Ptolemy Philopator.

AMONG the losses in Greek literature few are so tantalising as the almost absolute extinction of the tragic poets who preceded and followed the supreme Athenian triumvirate. It would have been exceedingly interesting to trace the history of the Drama from its rude origins up to the point at which the creative genius of Æschylus gave it an inalienable character, and again to note the deviation of the tragic muse from heroic themes to fables of pure fiction under the influence of Agathon. This pleasant task of analytical criticism,

Gaps in the records of Greek tragedy.

concordant with the spirit of our age, which is not satisfied with admiring masterpieces unless it can also understand the law of their growth and mark the several stages in the process of historical development, will fall to the lot of no student now, unless, indeed, Pompeii or Egyptian sepulchres render up a treasure-house of MSS. as yet undreamed of, and scholars save the priceless leaflets of charred tinder from destruction.

The iniquity  
of oblivion  
blindly  
scattereth  
her poppy.

Why is it that out of the seventy plays of Æschylus only seven are extant; of the Sophoclean one hundred and thirteen (allowing seventeen others which bore his name to have been spurious) only seven; while eighteen—or, if we admit the *Rhesus*, nineteen—are the meagre salvage from the wreck of at least seventy-five dramas by Euripides? Why is it that of their lost tragedies we possess but inconsiderable fragments—just enough to prove that the compilers of commonplace books like Stobæus might, if they had pleased, have gratified our curiosity beyond the dreams of a Renaissance scholar's covetousness? Why, again, is it that of Agathon, whose dramatic romance, *The Flower*, was thought worthy of citation by Aristotle, whom Aristophanes named as Ἀγάθων ὁ κλεινός, ἀγαθὸς ποιητὴς καὶ ποθεινὸς τοῖς φίλοις,<sup>1</sup> whose thanksgiving banquet supplied a frame for Plato's dialogue on Love, and whose style, if faithfully depicted by the philosopher, was a very "rivulet of olive oil noiselessly running"—why is it that of this Agathon we know nothing but what may be inferred from the caricature of the *Thesmophoriazuseæ*, the portrait of the *Symposium*, and a few critical strictures in the *Poetics*? Why is it that Ion, who enjoyed a great renown (περιβόητος ἐγένετο) and ranked as fifth in the muster-roll of Athenian tragic poets, is now but a mere empty name? To these questions, which might be rhetorically multiplied *ad infinitum* on a hundred tones of querulous and sad expostulation with the past, there is no satisfactory answer. Not, as Bacon asserted, has Time borne down upon his flood only the

<sup>1</sup> "Agathon the famous, a good poet, and longed for by his friends."

froth and trash of things ; far rather may we thank Fate that the flotsam and the jetsam that have reached our shore include the best works of antiquity. Yet, notwithstanding this, "the iniquity of oblivion," in the words of Sir Thomas Browne, "blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity."

The students of antiquity attached less value than we do to literature of secondary importance. It was the object of their criticism, especially in the schools of Alexandria, to establish canons of perfection in style. The few great authors who were deemed worthy to rank as standards received unlimited honour, nor was it thought too much by Aristarchus or Aristophanes to devote a lifetime to their service. For inferior poets, whom we should prize as necessary to a full comprehension of the history of art, they felt less respect, not having grasped the notion that æsthetics are a branch of science, that the topmost peaks of Parnassus tower above the plain by gradual ascent from subordinate mountain-ranges, and that those who seek to scale the final altitudes must tread the intermediate heights. They were contented with representative men. Marlowe, according to their laws of taste, would have been obscured by Shakespeare ; while the multitude of lesser playwrights, whom we honour as explaining and relieving by their comradeship the grandeur of *the* dramatist (ὁ τραγωδοποιὸς they might have styled Shakespeare, as their Pindar was ὁ λυρικός), would have sunk into oblivion, leaving him alone in splendid isolation. Much might be said for this way of dealing with literature. By concentrating attention on undeniable excellence, a taste for the noblest things in art was fostered, while the danger that we run of substituting the historical for the æsthetic method was avoided.<sup>1</sup> In our own century Auguste Comte has striven to

Differences  
between  
antique and  
modern  
theories of  
criticism.

<sup>1</sup> Aristophanes, the grammarian, and Aristarchus included five tragic poets—Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Ion, and Achæus—in the first rank. In a second series they placed the works of the so-called Pleiad,

revive the cultus of unique standards and to re-establish the empire of selective canons.

Alexandrian  
scholars  
and their  
critique.

The Scholiasts of Alexandria, working in vast libraries which contained the whole treasures of Greek literature, decided that only a few poets were worthy of minute study. The works of these few poets, again, they classified into master-pieces and inferior productions. A further selection sifted those that seemed best suited for the education of youth. Thus it happened that copies were repeated of certain well-established favourites; and so the treasures of dramatic poetry inherited by us represent the taste of scholiasts and teachers rather than the likings of the Attic audience. To judge by references in the plays of Aristophanes, the lost *Myrmidones* of Æschylus, the lost *Andromeda* of Euripides, enjoyed more popularity at Athens than even the *Agamemnon* or the *Medea*. Alexandrian and Byzantine pedagogues thought otherwise, and posterity was bound to be their pensioner. The difficulty of multiplying codices must be added as a most important cause of literary waste. It is doubtful whether we should now possess more than a few plays of Shakespeare and Jonson, out of the whole voluminous Elizabethan literature, but for the accident of printing. When we consider the circumstances under which the Attic dramatists survived, taking into account the famous fraud whereby Ptolemy Euergetes possessed himself of the MS. of Æschylus,<sup>1</sup> and remembering the vicissitudes successively of Alexandria, of Rome, and of Byzantium, perhaps we ought to be surprised that the sum total of our inheritance is so great. What the public voice of the Athenians had approved, the scholiasts of Alexandria winnowed. What the Alexandrians selected, found its way to Rome. What the Roman grammarians sanctioned, was seven tragic poets who at Alexandria revived the style of the Attic drama. Their names were Homerus, Sositheus, Lycophron, Alexander, Philiscus, Sosiphanes, and Dionysiades.

<sup>1</sup> The story is told with wonderful vividness by Victor Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, pp. 176-194.

carried in the dotage of culture to Byzantium. At each transition the peril by land and sea to rare codices, sometimes probably to unique autographs, was incalculable. Then followed the fury of iconoclasts and fanatics, the fire-brands of Omar, the remorseless crusade of churchmen against paganism, and the three great conflagrations of Byzantium. It is humiliating to the nations of Western Europe to compare the wealth of Greek books enjoyed by Photius in the ninth century, even after the second burning, with the meagre fragments which seem to have survived the pillage of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204. To this final disaster we ought probably to assign the destruction of the larger portion of Greek literature. In addition to all the ruin wrought by fire and pillage must be reckoned the slow decay of learning during the centuries of intellectual apathy that preceded the fall of the Eastern Empire. What the fire and the Frank had spared, was still exposed to the tooth of the worm and to the slow corrosion of dust, damp, and mildew.

Rome,  
Byzantium,  
Islam,  
Western  
barbarism.

When the passion for antiquity was rekindled in the fourteenth century by the Italians, they eagerly demanded from Constantinople the treasures that the capital of Greece contained: nor is there any good reason to suppose that the Turkish troops of Mahomet II. in 1453 destroyed many books that had not previously been transferred in copies to Florence and Venice. During at least a quarter of a century before the downfall of the Byzantine Empire the princes of Italy were eagerly competing with each other for the purchase of Greek manuscripts; and throughout this period it was the immediate interest of the Palæologi to lay them under such obligations as might enlist their sympathy and call forth a return of friendly service. For the Emperor to have closed the doors of the Byzantine libraries against the agents of the Medici and the Venetian nobles, at the same time that he was sending Manuel Chrysoloras as an ambassador for aid against the Turks to Western Europe, would have been ridiculous.

Revival of  
learning.

We must also bear in mind how many eager Italian scholars, supported by exhibitions from the lords of Florence, and supplied with almost unlimited credit for the purchase of literary treasures, pursued their studies at Constantinople and returned, like bees, book-laden with the honey of old learning, home; how many Levant merchants, passing to and fro between Italian and Greek ports, discovered that parchments were a more profitable freight than gems or spices. Taking all this into consideration, and duly weighing Curzon's competent opinion—"so thoroughly were these ancient libraries (of Athos) explored in the fifteenth century that no unknown classic author has been discovered, nor has any MS. been found of greater antiquity than some already known in the British Museum and other libraries"—we have the right to infer that what the printing press of Aldus made imperishable, was all or nearly all that the degenerate scholars of the later age of Hellas cared to treasure. The comparative preservation of Neoplatonic philosophy, for example, when contrasted with the loss of dramatic literature, may be referred to the theological and mystical interests of Byzantine students. Only one codex of first-rate importance is supposed to have perished in Italy after importation from Byzantium and before the age of printing. That was a MS. of Menander, which Vespasiano, the Florentine bookseller, mentioned among the gems of the library of Urbino.<sup>1</sup> Little, however, was known about the Greek dramatic poets at the time when Vespasiano wrote his *Lives*, and it is not impossible that what he took for a collection of Menander's plays, was really a commonplace book of such fragments as we still possess. Yet the mere mention of this volume raises curious speculation. We know that when Cesare Borgia possessed himself of Urbino in 1502 he carried off from the ducal palace a booty in jewels, plate, furniture, and books, to the value of 150,000 ducats. Some of the MSS.

A lost  
codex of  
Menander.

<sup>1</sup> *Vite di Uomini Illustri*, p. 97. He catalogues "tutte l' opere di Sofocle; tutte l' opere di Pindaro; tutte l' opere di Menandro."



found their way into the Vatican collection; others were restored to Urbino, whence they were again transferred to Rome after the extinction of the ducal family in the seventeenth century. It is conceivable that the Menander, if it existed, may have been lost in the hurry of forced marches and the confusion that involved the Borgia's career. Had it been stolen, the thief could hardly have offered it for sale in its splendid dress of crimson velvet and silver clasps stamped with the arms of Montefeltro. It may even now be lurking somewhere in obscurity—a treasure of more value than the Koh-i-noor.

Putting aside the fragments of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, it may be broadly stated that what survives of the other tragic poets of the Attic stage, and what we know about their lives, have been derived in the main from four sources. The plays of Aristophanes and the fragments of the later comic poets, who were the merciless critics of contemporary tragedians, have, in the first place, supplied us with some meagre quotations and with numerous insignificant caricatures. From these questionable authorities we learn, for instance, that Agathon was a man of effeminate manners, that Philocles was horribly ugly, that Morsimus was an indifferent eye-doctor as well as a writer of tame tragedies, that Meletus had no inspiration, that the whole family of Carkinus were barbarians, that Pythangelus and Akestor were no better than slaves, that Gnesippus mismanaged his choruses, that Hieronymus delighted in horrors, that Nothippus and Morychus were gluttons, that Moschion was a parasite, and so forth. To attach very much weight to comic squibs which dwell exclusively upon personal defects and foibles, and repeat *ad nauseam* the stock Athenian calumnies of drunkenness and debauchery, would be uncritical; though it must be borne in mind that satire in a Greek city, where all the eminent burghers were well known to the playgoers, was pointless unless it contained a grain of truth. Our second great

Sources of  
information  
on the lost  
tragedians—  
Aristo-  
phanes.

Athenæus. authority is Athenæus, a man of wide reading and extensive curiosity, whose heart unhappily was set on trifles. Sauces, unguents, wreaths, the various ways of dressing fish, the changes of fashion in wine-drinking, formed the subjects of his profoundest investigations. Therefore the grave and heightened tragedies of our unfortunate poets were ransacked by him for rare citations, capable of throwing light upon a flower, a dish, or a wine-cup. These matters were undoubtedly the veriest *parerga* to poets bent on moving the passions of terror and pity; nor can we imagine a more distressing torment for their souls in Hades than to know that what remains of a much-pondered and beloved *Thyestes*, is a couple of lines about a carving-knife or meat-dish. To be known to posterity through a calumny of Aristophanes and a citation in the *Deipnosophistæ*, after having passed a long life in composing tragedies, teaching choruses, and inventing chants, is a caricature of immortality which might well deter a man of common sense from literature, and induce the vainest to go down speechless to the grave in peace.

Stobæus. Those poets who fell under the hands of Stobæus, our third chief source of information, have fared better. It is more consistent with the aims and wishes of a tragic artist to survive, however mangled, in the commonplace book of a moralist than in the miscellanies of a literary *bon vivant*. The authors, therefore, of the Euripidean school,

“ Teachers best  
Of moral prudence, with delight received,  
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat  
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,”

may be said to have fared better than their predecessors, whose style rendered them less conveniently subject to the eclectic process of the Macedonian collector. Much of the difficulty, however, which obscures the text of these sententious fragments, arises from their collector having in all probability quoted from memory, so that bad grammar, trivial terminations to other-

wise well-worded lines, and passages ruthlessly compressed by omissions are frequent. In the fourth place we have to thank Aristotle. Aristotle. for a few most precious, though, alas, laconic, criticisms pronounced in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* upon his contemporaries, and for occasional quotations in the *Ethics* to Nicomachus and Eudemus. These criticisms help us to understand the history of the Greek drama by throwing a dim light upon the serious art of many defunct poets, who in their day shook the Attic scene. To Plutarch, to Pausanias, and to the Scholiasts we owe similar obligations, though the value of their critical remarks is slight compared with that of every word which fell from Aristotle's pen.

This rapid enumeration of the resources at our command will prepare any one familiar with such matters for spare and disappointing entertainment. The chief interest of such a survey as that which I propose to make, consists in the variety and extent of the lost dramatic literature that it reveals. Nothing but a detailed examination of existing fragments suffices to impress the mind with the quantity of plays from which malignant fortune has preserved samples, fantastically inadequate, and, in many cases, tantalisingly uncharacteristic. The quotations from Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, meanwhile, have already supplied matter of more sterling and intrinsic value.

When we take up the collection of *Perditorum Tragicorum Omnium Fragmenta* published at Paris by the care of M. Ambroise Firmin Didot, our first sensation, on seeking what may possibly be left of poets before Æschylus, is one of liveliest disappointment. Thespis, to begin with, is a name: we know that he made tragedy dramatic instead of dithyrambic, by introducing monologue in order to support and rest the Chorus; but that is all. Chœrilus is a name: we know that he exhibited above fifty plays, that he was reckoned worthy by the comic poet Alexis to be cited together with Hesiod, Homer, and Epicharmus, and that Aristotle devoted three lost books of

Enormous  
mass of lost  
tragic  
literature.

Predecessors  
of Æschy-  
lus.

Pratinas and  
Phrynichus.

critical discussions to the elucidation of difficult passages in his poems as well as in those of Archilochus and Euripides. All the rest is obscure, except that we have reason to believe that Chœrilus excelled in the satyric drama. Pratinas, again, is a name. Dim tradition reports that he invented the satyric drama; and it has thence been inferred with probability that the 150 plays ascribed to him were chiefly composed in tetralogies of one comic and three serious pieces. He was also celebrated for the excellence of his lyrics; while a story, preserved by Suidas, relates how an accident that happened to the wooden stage at Athens during the exhibition of one of his tragedies, led to the building of the recently discovered theatre of Dionysus. A few unimportant fragments have survived, in two of which Pratinas avows his preference for the Æolian mood in music. Phrynichus, though his poems have fared no better than those of his contemporaries, stands before us with a more distinguished personality. Herodotus tells the famous tale of his tragedy upon the *Taking of Miletus*, which moved the Athenian audience to tears, and so angered them by the vivid presentation of a recent disaster that they fined the author in a sum of 1000 drachmas, and forbade the acting of his drama. The sweetness of the songs of Phrynichus has reached us like the echo of a bird's voice in a traveller's narrative. Aristophanes, who loved the good old music of his youth, delighted in it, and invented one of his rare verbal conglomerates to express its quality: *καὶ μυυρίζοντες μέλη ἀρχαιομελησιδωνοφρυνιχήρατα* is a phrase he puts into the mouth of Bdelycleon in the *Wasps*, while in the *Frogs* he describes Phrynichus as making harvest in the meadows of the Muses. Agathon, again, in the *Thesmophoriazuse* is represented saying:—

“And Phrynichus—this surely you have heard—  
Was beautiful, and beautifully dressed;  
And this, we cannot doubt, was why his plays  
Were beautiful; for 'tis a natural law  
That like ourselves our work must ever be.”

From the passage just referred to in the *Frogs* (1298-1307) it is clear that much of a tragic poet's reputation for originality at Athens depended upon the invention of melodies, and that the merit of Phrynichus consisted to some extent in the excellence and sweetness of his tunes. No real light can now be thrown upon the dark subject of Greek music in general, and of its relation to lyrical and tragic poetry in particular. All we know serves to excite our inquisitiveness without satisfying it. Thus Plutarch informs us that Phrynichus and Æschylus preferred the harp (*κίθαρα*) and adhered to the enharmonic scale (*ἁρμονία*) instead of employing chromatic modulations (*χρῶμα*). The general drift of this remark is that the early tragic poets maintained a simple and severe style of music, and avoided the allurements of what Aristotle termed the most artificial of the Greek scales. Collateral value is given to Plutarch's observation by the Aristophanic criticism of the melodies in Agathon and Euripides. For speculations on its deeper significance, it is impossible to do more than refer the curious to Professor Donkin, General Perronet Thompson, and Mr. Chappell, with the reiterated warning that the obscurity of the subject is impenetrable. Phrynichus, in conclusion, was celebrated as a ballet-master for his Pyrrhic dances, and as a practical dramatist for the introduction of female characters. One line, among the few ascribed to him, calls for quotation by reason of its beauty :—

Music of the  
Greek  
drama.

λάμπει δ' ἐνὶ πορφύρεαῖς παρῇσι φῶς ἔρωτος,

"The light of love burns upon crimson cheeks."

Aristias, the next in order of these lost poets, was a son of Pratinas, who lived long enough to compete with Sophocles. The names of his plays, *Anteus*, *Atalanta*, *Cyclops*, *Orpheus*, and *The Fates*, show, like similar lists which might be quoted from the meagre notices of his predecessors, that the whole material of Greek mythology was handled and rehandled by the Attic playwrights.

Aristias.

Aristarchus  
of Tegea.

The tragedians who follow can certainly not be considered older than Æschylus, and are, all of them, most probably his juniors. Aristarchus, a native of Tegea, calls for notice because he is reported by Suidas to have determined the length of tragedies, whatever that may mean. Ennius translated his drama of *Achilles* into Latin, which proves that he retained the fame of a first-rate poet till the beginning of the Græco-Roman period. His fragments recall the Euripidean style ; and the two best of them have been preserved by Stobæus, the notorious admirer of Euripides. To omit these, in the dearth of similar heirlooms from antiquity, would be wasteful, especially as they serve to determine the date at which he wrote, and to confirm the report of Suidas that he was a contemporary of Euripides. Here is one that savours strongly of agnosticism :<sup>1</sup>—

καὶ ταῦτ' ἴσον μὲν εὖ λέγειν ἴσον δέ μή·  
ἴσον δ' ἐρευνᾶν, ἐξ ἴσου δέ μή εἰδέναι·  
πλείον γὰρ οὐδὲν οἱ σοφοὶ τῶν μὴ σοφῶν  
εἰς ταῦτα γινώσκουσιν· εἰ δ' ἄλλου λέγει  
ἄμεινον ἄλλος, τῷ λέγειν ὑπερφέρει.

The second treats of love :<sup>2</sup>—

ἔρωτος ὅστις μὴ πεπείραται βροτῶν,  
οὐκ οἶδ' ἀνάγκης θεσμόν· ᾧ πεισθεὶς ἐγὼ  
οὕτω κρατηθεὶς τάσδ' ἀπεστάλην ὁδούς·  
οὗτος γὰρ ὁ θεὸς καὶ τὸν ἀσθενῆ σθένειν  
τίθησι, καὶ τὸν ἄπορον εὐρίσκειν πόρον.

<sup>1</sup> "Fair speech in such things and no speech are one :  
Study and ignorance have equal value :  
For wise men know no more than simple fools  
In these dark matters ; and if one by speaking  
Conquer another, mere words win the day."

<sup>2</sup> "That man who hath not tried of love the might  
Knows not the strong rule of necessity,  
Bound and constrained, whereby this road I travel ;  
Yea, our lord, Love, strengthens the strengthless, teaches  
The craftless how to find both craft and cunning."

Next to Aristarchus of Tegea we find Neophron of Sikyon, Neophron  
of Sikyon. who claims particular attention as the author of a tragedy acknowledged by antiquity to have been the original of the *Medea* of Euripides. There are few students of literature who do not recognise in the *Medea* the masterpiece of that poet, and who have not wondered why it only won the third prize at Athens, in the year 431 B.C. Is it possible that because Euripides borrowed his play from Neophron—τὸ δράμα δοκεῖ υποβαλέσθαι παρὰ Νεόφρονος διασκευάσας (he seems to have appropriated and revised the drama from Neophron) are the words of the Greek argument to *Medea*, while Suidas says of Neophron οὐ φάσιν εἶναι τὴν τοῦ Εὐριπίδου Μήδειαν (by whom, as it is said, was the *Medea* of Euripides)—therefore the public and the judges thought some deduction should be made from the merit of the drama?

Stobæus has handed down a long and precious fragment from the speech in which Neophron's *Medea* decides to kill her children. A comparison of this passage with the splendid rhesis composed for *Medea* by Euripides proves the obligation owed by the younger poet to the elder, both in style and matter.

Here, then, is the monologue of Neophron's *Medea*:<sup>1</sup>—

Neophron's  
*Medea*.

εἶεν· τί δράσεις θυμέ; βούλεισαι καλῶς  
πρὶν ἢ ῥαμαρτεῖν καὶ τὰ προσφιλέστατα  
ἔχθιστα θέσθαι. ποῖ ποτ' ἐξηξας τάλας;  
κάτισχε λῆμα καὶ σθένος θεοστηγές.  
καὶ πρὸς τί ταῦτ' ὀδύρομαι, ψυχὴν ἐμὴν  
ὀρῶσ' ἔρημον καὶ παρημελημένην  
πρὸς ὧν ἐχρὴν ἦκιστα; μαλθακοὶ δὲ δὴ

---

<sup>1</sup> "Well, well; what wilt thou do, my soul? Think much  
Before this sin be sinned, before thy dearest  
Thou turn to deadliest foes. Whither art bounding?  
Restrain thy force, thy god-detested fury.  
And yet why grieve I thus, seeing my life  
Laid desolate, despitefully abandoned  
By those who least should leave me? Soft, forsooth,

τοιαῖτα γιγνόμεσθα πάσχοντες κακά ;  
 οὐ μὴ προδώσεις θυμὲ σαντὸν ἐν κακοῖς.  
 οἶμοι δέδοκται· παῖδες ἐκτὸς ὁμμάτων  
 ἀπέλθου· ἤδη γάρ με φοινία μέγαι  
 δέδουκε λύσσα θυμόν· ὦ χέρες χέρες,  
 πρὸς οἶον ἔργον ἐξοπλιζόμεσθα· φεύ·  
 τάλαινα τόλμης, ἢ πολὺν πόνον βραχεῖ  
 διαφθεροῦσα τὸν ἐμὸν ἔρχομαι χρόνῳ.

It is hardly possible not to recognise in these lines the first sketch of the picture afterwards worked out so elaborately in detail by Euripides.

Ion of  
Chios.

Ion was a native of Chios, who came while still quite a boy (*παντάπασι μενιράκιον*) to Athens, and enjoyed the honour of supping with Cimon in the house of a certain Laomedon. Of his life and work very little is known, although his reputation among the ancients was so great that the Alexandrians placed him among the first five tragic poets. The titles of eleven of his plays have been preserved ; but these were only few out of many that he wrote. He was, besides, a voluminous prose-author, and practised every kind of lyrical poetry. From the criticism of Longinus we gather that his dramas were distinguished for fluency and finish rather than for boldness of conception or sublimity of style. After praising their regularity, Longinus adds that he would not exchange the *Œdipus* of Sophocles for all the tragedies of Ion put together. Personally, Ion had the reputation of a voluptuary : *φιλοπότην καὶ ἐρωτικώτατον* (a wine-bibber and inordinately given to love) are the words of Athenæus which describe him. There is also a story that he passed some portion of his life at Corinth in love-bondage to the beautiful Chrysis. In short, both as

---

Shall I be in the midst of wrongs like these ?  
 Nay, heart of mine, be not thy own betrayer !  
 Ah me ! 'Tis settled. Children, from my sight  
 Get you away ! for now bloodthirsty madness  
 Sinks in my soul and swells it. Oh, hands, hands,  
 Unto what deed are we accounted ? Woe !  
 Undone by my own daring ! In one minute  
 I go to blast the fruit of my long toil."



a man and as an artist, Ion was true to his name and race. It is unfortunate that the few fragments we possess of Ion's tragedies have been transmitted for the most part by Hesychius and Athenæus in illustration of grammatical usages and convivial customs. The following gnomic couplet, preserved by Plutarch, is both interesting in itself and characteristic of the poet's style: <sup>1</sup>—

τὸ γνῶθι σαυτὸν, τοῦτ' ἔπος μὲν οὐ μέγα,  
ἔργον δ', ὅσον Ζεὺς μόνος ἐπίστανται θεῶν.

Another passage, quoted by Sextus Empiricus, contains an elegant description of the power of Sparta: <sup>2</sup>—

οὐ γὰρ λόγοις Λάκαινα πυργοῦται πόλις,  
ἀλλ' εὖτ' Ἄρης νεοχμὸς ἐμπέσῃ στρατῷ,  
βουλὴ μὲν ἄρχει, χεὶρ δ' ἐπεξεργάζεται.

Almost less can be said about Achæus of Eretria, the fifth, with Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Ion, in the Alexandrian *πρώτη τάξις* or first class of tragic worthies. Diogenes Laertius records his skill in the satyric drama; Athenæus remarks that his style was obscure, and that he filled his plays with riddles. The names of some of his dramas—*Linus*, *The Fates*, *Philoctetes at Troy*, *Omphale*, *Peirithous*—excite our curiosity; but the fragments are, as usual, cited for some merely frivolous or pedantic purpose.

Achæus of  
Eretria.

The following corrupt passage from a play called *Ἀθλοὶ* or *Ἀθλα*, *The Games*—the loss of which is greatly to be regretted, since it might have thrown a new light upon the feeling of the Greeks for their public contests—presents a lively picture of the physical splendour of trained athletes: <sup>3</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> "Know thou thyself—the saw is no great thing;  
To do it, Zeus alone of gods is able."

<sup>2</sup> "The town of Sparta is not walled with words;  
But when young Ares falls upon her men,  
Then reason rules and the hand does the deed."

<sup>3</sup> It is clear that γὰρ ᾤθουν is wrong. The best suggestion seems to be γ' ἀνωθεν, adopting which we may render the lines thus:—

Greek  
athletes.

γυμνοὶ γὰρ ὦθουν φαίδιμους βραχίονας  
ἤβη σφριγῶντες ἐμπορεύονται, νέφ  
στίλβοντες ἄνθει καρτερὰς ἐπωμίδας·  
ἄδην δ' ἐλαίου στέρνα καὶ ποδῶν κύτος  
χρίουσιν, ὥς ἔχοντες οἴκοθεν τρυφήν.

Another glimpse of athletes may be got from three lines torn out of the same play :<sup>1</sup>—

πότερα θεωροῖς εἴτ' ἀγωνισταῖς λέγεις ;  
πόλλ' ἐσθίουσιν, ὥς ἐπασκούντων τρόπος.  
ποδαποὶ γάρ εἰσιν οἱ ξένοι ; Βοιώτιοι.

In this portrait we recognise the young men satirically described by Euripides in a fragment, translated above, of the lost *Autolycus* as roaming about the city in the radiant insolence of youth, like animated statues.

Agathon.

Mourn as we may the loss of Ion and Achæus, our grief for that of Agathon must needs be greater. Though he was not placed in the first class by the Alexandrian critics, it is clear from the notices of Plato, Aristophanes, and Aristotle, that he enjoyed the widest popularity at Athens, and was, besides, a poet of marked originality. Personally, he was amiable, delicate, pleasure-loving, and extremely beautiful. He is always called—even by Plutarch and Athenæus—'Αγάθων ὁ καλός, Agathon the beautiful ; while the passionate friendship with which he had inspired Pausanias is celebrated by Plato in *Protagoras*, by Xenophon in the *Symposium*. Plato himself is supposed to have composed an epigram on the kiss of Agathon, which has been translated by Shelley. Later authors, like Maximus Tyrius, gave him the title of ἀβρό-  
τατος (most delicate), while Lucian compared him to Cinyras

"Naked above, their radiant arms displaying,  
In lustihood of ruffling youth, and bloom  
Of beauty bright on stalwart breasts, they fare ;  
Their shoulders and their feet in floods of oil  
Are bathed, like men whose homes abound in plenty."

<sup>1</sup> "Ambassadors or athletes do you mean ?  
Great feeders are they, like most men in training.  
Of what race are the strangers, then ? Bœotians."

or Sardanapalus. Apparently he was rich enough to indulge the most luxurious tastes. One of the best comic scenes in the *Thesmophoriazuse* is that in which Aristophanes described Agathon surrounded by all the appliances of a voluptuary, while engaged in the composition of an effeminate play. Euripides, entering this study of a Sybarite, implores him to put on female attire, using these arguments: <sup>1</sup>—

Voluptuous  
tastes and  
dainty style  
of Agathon.

σὺ δ' εὐπρόσωπος, λευκὸς, ἐξυρμημένος,  
γυναικίφωτος, ἀπαλὸς, εὐπρεπῆς ἰδεῖν.

In poetry Agathon adopted innovations consistent with his own voluptuous temperament. His style was distinguished by melodious sweetness and rhetorical refinement; in particular, we are told that he affected the flowery tropes and the antitheses of Gorgias. Sophistry was fashionable in his youth, and Aristophanes recognised in Agathon the true companion of Euripides. Leaving the severer music of the elder tragedians, he invented chromatic melodies, which seem to have tickled the sensuality of his Athenian audience.<sup>2</sup>

We are therefore justified in regarding Agathon as the creator of a new tragic style combining the verbal elegances and ethical niceties of the sophists with artistic charms of a luxurious kind. Aristotle observes that he separated the Chorus from the action of the drama to such an extent that his lyrics became mere musical interludes (*ἐμβόλιμα*) equally adapted to any tragic fable.<sup>3</sup> He also remarks that Agathon composed plays upon romantic subjects, inventing the story for himself, instead of adhering to the old usage of rehandling

His abandon-  
ment of the  
earlier tragic  
method.

<sup>1</sup> "While you are smooth-faced, white-skinned, closely shaven,  
Voiced like a woman, tender, fair to see."

<sup>2</sup> This is strongly expressed in an untranslatable speech of Mnesilochus (Ar. *Thesmoph.* 130 *et seq.*) which reminds one of the first satire of Persius:—

"Cum carmina lumbum  
Intrant et tremulo scalpuntur ut intima versu."

<sup>3</sup> *Poet.* cap. 18.

Plato and  
Aristotle  
upon  
Agathon.

mythological material.<sup>1</sup> The title of one of these dramatic romances, *The Flower*, has been preserved; but unhappily we are told nothing about its subject, and have no extracts to judge from. That the form of tragedy suffered other changes at the hands of Agathon, may be inferred from another passage in the *Poetics*, where Aristotle censures him for having included a whole epic, *The Taking of Troy*, in one play.<sup>2</sup> This play, it may be said in passing, was hissed off the stage. The popularity of Agathon may be gathered from the fact that the first tetralogy he exhibited was crowned in 416 B.C. Plato has chosen the supper-party which he gave in celebration of this victory for the scene of the *Symposium*; and it is there that we must learn to know this brilliant man of letters and of fashion in the wittiest period of Attic social life. It is not a little curious that the most interesting fragments of Agathon are embedded in the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* of Aristotle, who must have made attentive study of his works. While discussing the subject of free-will, the sage of Stageira quotes this couplet:<sup>3</sup>—

μόνον γὰρ αὐτοῦ καὶ θεὸς στερίσκεται,  
ἀγένητα ποιεῖν ἄσσο' ἂν ἢ πεπραγμένα.

Again, on the topic of art and chance, he cites:<sup>4</sup>—

τέχνη τύχην ἑσπερξε καὶ τύχη τέχνην.

Speaking in the *Eudemian Ethics* about the true and spurious kinds of courage, he adds:<sup>5</sup>—

καθάπερ καὶ Ἀγάθων φησί·  
φαῦλοι βροτῶν γὰρ τοῦ πονεῖν ἡσσωμένοι  
θανεῖν ἐρώσι.

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* cap. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* cap. 18.

<sup>3</sup> "For from this one thing God himself is barred—  
To make what's done as though it ne'er had been."

<sup>4</sup> "Art is true friend of chance, and chance of art."

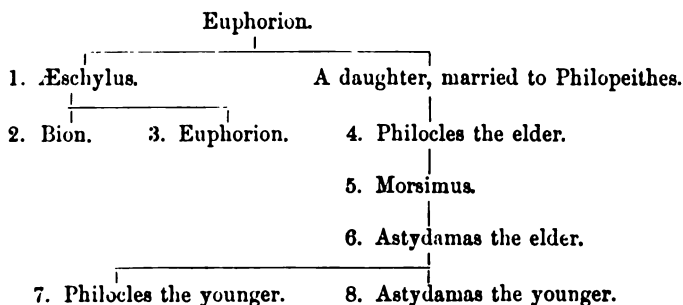
<sup>5</sup> "Even as saith also Agathon:  
Worsted by suffering, cowards dote on death."

Another quotation, for the sake of both the poet and the philosopher, may be adduced from the *Rhetoric*:<sup>1</sup>—

καὶ μὴν τὰ μὲν γε τῇ τέχνῃ πράσσειν, τὰ δὲ  
ἡμῖν ἀνάγκη καὶ τύχῃ προσγίγνεται.

One of the peculiarities to be noticed in the practice of the poetic art among the Greeks was the formation of schools by families of artists, in whom talent continued to be hereditary for several generations. We observe this among the lyrists ; but the tragedians offer even more remarkable instances, proving how thoroughly the most complicated of all the arts, the tragic drama—including, as it did, the teaching of music and of dancing to Choruses, the arrangement of stage effects, and the training of actors—was followed as a profession at Athens. That Phrynichus founded a school of playwrights distinguished for their musical rather than their dramatic ability, appears from the nineteenth section of the *Problemata* of Aristotle ; but we do not know whether the οἱ περὶ Φρύνιχον (set or coterie of Phrynichus) there mentioned belonged to the poet's family. It is possible, on the other hand, to draw the pedigree of Æschylus, in which every name will represent a tragic poet. Here it is :—

**Families of  
tragic poets.**



<sup>1</sup> I have followed Grotius in transposing *τέχνη* and *τέχνη*, and translate:—

“ Thus some things we can do by art, while some  
Are thrust on us as fate and fortune will.”

Eight mem-  
bers of the  
family of  
Æschylus.

The *οἱ περὶ Αἰσχυλον*, therefore, of whom the Scholiasts often speak, numbered, together with Æschylus himself, eight dramatists. Their common characteristic consisted in the adherence to the Æschylean style, in the presentation of tetralogies, and in the privilege successively enjoyed by them of bringing out old plays of Æschylus in competition with the works of younger poets. The dramas of Æschylus were in fact "a property" to his descendants. The Athenians had publicly decreed that they might be from year to year produced upon the scene, and Euphorion, his son, spent his time in preparing them for exhibition. In this way he gained four prizes, taking the first crown upon the notable occasion in 431 B.C., when Sophocles was second, and Euripides, with the *Medea*, third. It appears that, as time went on, the original compositions of Æschylus suffered mutilations and alterations at the hands of his posterity, who pretended to improve them—after the manner of Davenant, presumably—and adapt them to the modern taste. At last Lycurgus, about 340 B.C., decreed that after accurate copies had been taken of the authorised text and deposited in the public archives, the clerk of the city should collate them with the acted plays, and see that no deviations from the original became established. We gather from the comic poets that the family of Æschylus also produced their own tragedies, none of which, however, appear to have been very excellent. Philocles the elder was laughed at by Aristophanes partly because he was an ugly, snub-nosed, little man, with a head like a hoopoe, partly because he introduced a comic incident into his tragedy of *Pandionis* by exhibiting Tereus dressed out with the feathers of a bird. The Scholiasts to Aristophanes, in like manner, inform us that Morsimus owed a certain celebrity to his ugliness, to the tameness of his tragic style, and to his want of skill as a professional oculist. Astydamas the elder achieved the same sad sort of immortality through the accident of having received the honour of a public statue before Æschylus. It is

lost labour trying to form a clear conception of poets who are only known to us in anecdotes like these.

Frederick Wagner, the collector of the tragic fragments, reckons Meletus, the accuser of Socrates, and Plato, the divine philosopher, among the school of Æschylus, because it appears that both of them composed tetralogies. From a passage in the Scholiast to Aristophanes (*Frogs*, 1302) it may be inferred that Meletus, the tragedian, and Meletus, the informer, were one and the same person: *καμψδεῖται δὲ καὶ ὡς ψυχρὸς ἐν τῇ ποιήσει καὶ ὡς πονηρὸς τὸν τρόπον*—"he is satirised both for want of genius as a poet and also for the badness of his moral character." This sentence constitutes his title to fame. He is known to have composed a series of plays with the title *Ædipodeia*, the plot, as sketched by Hyginus,<sup>1</sup> offering some notable divergences from the Sophoclean treatment of the tale of Thebes. Plato may be numbered among the tragedians on the strength of an anecdote in Ælian,<sup>2</sup> according to which he had composed a tetralogy, and had already distributed the parts to the actors, when he determined to abandon poetry, and gave his verses to the flames.

Meletus and  
Plato.

The school of Sophocles includes two sons of the poet, Iophon and Ariston, and his grandson Sophocles. In fact, it combines the actors in that family drama played out before the jury of the tribe, when the singer of Colonus silenced his accuser by the recitation of the Chorus from his second *Ædipus*. Iophon exhibited tragedies with distinguished success during the life of Sophocles, and even entered into competition with his father. After the old man's death he produced the posthumous works that formed his heirloom, completing such as were unfinished, or executing those of which the plan was sketched in outline. He is said to have exhibited fifty plays, and that he was no mean poet appears from the following passage of the *Frogs*:<sup>3</sup>—

The family of  
Sophocles.

<sup>1</sup> *Fab.* 172.

<sup>2</sup> *Varia Historia*, ii. 30. Compare *Diog. Laert.* iii. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Frere's translation, p. 229.

- "*H.* Is not Iophon a good one?—He's alive, sure.  
*B.* If he's a good one, he's our only good one;  
 But it's a question; I'm in doubt about him.  
*H.* There's Sophocles; he's older than Euripides—  
 If you go so far for 'em, you'd best bring him.  
*B.* No; first I'll try what Iophon can do,  
 Without his father, Sophocles, to assist him."

Iophon and  
Ariston.

The drift of these lines would be obscure without some explanation to readers who have not studied Aristophanes. All the good tragic poets are dead, and Dionysus is journeying to Hades to fetch one back again to rule the Attic stage. Herakles falls into conversation with him on the subject, and reminds him that Iophon is living. The doubt expressed by Dionysus seems to refer to a suspicion prevalent at Athens that Sophocles helped his son in the composition of his plays. Meanwhile, the qualified praise awarded him by Dionysus implies considerable admiration on the part of so severe a castigator of the tragic dramatists as Aristophanes. Only four and a half lines, and these by no means noticeable, remain of Iophon. His half-brother Ariston has fared better, since we possess a long and curious dialogue upon Providence, quoted by Theophilus of Antioch from an unknown play of his. This fragment supports the Christian belief that, though the careless seem to prosper, while the virtuous get no benefit from their asceticism, justice will eventually be dealt with even hand to all:—

*χωρὶς προνοίας γίνεται γὰρ οὐδὲ ἔν.*

"Without foreknowledge there can nothing happen."

It is right to add that the authorship of these lines must be at least considered doubtful, and that their versification, as it now stands, is unworthy of the Attic drama.

Euripidean  
school.

By the middle of the fourth century before Christ the whole dramatic literature of the Athenians, both tragic and comic, was being penetrated with the Euripidean spirit. It is impossible not to notice in the style of these later playwrights either the



direct influence of Euripides or else the operation of the laws of intellectual development he illustrated. We cannot, therefore, treat the Euripidean school with the definiteness applicable to that of Æschylus or Sophocles. At the same time it is certain that a son or a nephew bearing his name continued to exhibit his posthumous dramas.

A stronger instance of histrionic and dramatic talent transmitted through four generations is presented by the family of Carkinus, some of whom were famous for mimetic dancing, while others contended in the theatre as playwrights. What we know about Carkinus and his children is chiefly derived from the satires of Aristophanes, who was never tired of abusing them. Their very name serves as a scarecrow, and the Muse is invoked to keep them off the stage. To stir the rubbish-heap of obscure allusions and pedantic annotations, in order to discover which of the six Carkinidæ we know by name were poets, and which of them were dancers, is a weary task not worth the labour it involves. Suffice it to say that the grandson of Aristophanes' old butt, himself called Carkinus, produced the incredible number of 160 dramas, was three times mentioned with respect by Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> and has survived in comparatively copious quotations. One passage, though not very remarkable for poetical beauty, is interesting because it describes the wanderings of Demeter through Sicily in search of Persephone. Diodorus, who cites it from an unknown play, mentions that Carkinus frequently visited Syracuse and saw the processions in honour of Demeter.

Family of  
Carkinus.

About the Attic tragedians who lived during the old age of Aristophanes, the first thing to notice is that they may fairly be called the Epigoni of Euripides. Æschylus was old-fashioned. The style of Sophocles did not lend itself to easy imitation. The psychological analyses, casuistical questions, rhetorical digressions, and pathetic situations, wherein the great poet of the *Hippolytus* delighted, were exactly suited to the intellectual

Successors  
of Euripides.

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* cap. 17; *Rhet.* ii. 23, iii. 16.

Aristophanes on the decay of the tragic drama.

tastes and temper of incipient decadence. A nation of philosophers and rhetoricians had arisen; and it is noteworthy that many of the playwrights of this period were either professed orators or statesmen. In his own lifetime Aristophanes witnessed the triumph of the principles against which he fought incessantly with all the weapons of the comic armoury. Listen to the complaint of Dionysus in the *Frogs*:<sup>1</sup>—

- "H. But have not you other ingenious youths  
That are fit to out-talk Euripides ten times over—  
To the amount of a thousand, at least, all writing tragedy?  
D. They're good for nothing—'Warblers of the Grove'—  
'Little, foolish, fluttering things'—poor puny wretches,  
That dawdle and dangle about with the tragic muse,  
Incapable of any serious meaning."

To translate the Greek for modern readers is not possible. The pith of the passage is found in this emphatic phrase, γόνιμον δὲ ποιητὴν ἂν οὐχ εὖροις ἔτι, "there's not a sound male poet capable of procreation left." Accordingly he vents his venom on Pythangelus, Gnesippus, Akestor, Hieronymus, Nothippus, Morychus, Sthenelus, Dorillus, Spintharus, and Theognis, without mercy. Not a single fragment remains to judge these wretched poets by. It is better to leave them in their obscurity than to drag them forth into the dubious light of comic ribaldry.

Critias. Critias, the son of Callæschrus, the pupil of Socrates, who figures in so many scenes of Xenophon and Plato, and who played a memorable part in the political crisis of 404 B.C., was a tragic poet of some talent, if we are to accept a fragment from the *Sisyphus* as his. Sextus Empiricus transcribed forty lines of this drama, setting forth the primitive conditions of humanity. First, says Critias, men began by living like the brutes, without rewards for virtue or punishment for vice. Mere might of hand prevailed. Then laws were framed and penalties affixed to crime. Open violence was thus repressed;

<sup>1</sup> Frere, p. 229.

but evil-doers flourished in secret. Fraud and hypocrisy took the place of force. To invent the dread of gods and to create a conscience was the next step taken by humanity. Then followed the whole scheme of religion, and with religion entered superstition, and men began to fear the thunder and to look with strange awe on the stars. The quotation is obviously imperfect: yet it may advantageously be compared with the speeches of Prometheus in Æschylus, and also with the speculations of Lucretius. The hypothesis of deliberate invention implied in the following phrases,<sup>1</sup>

τηνικαὐτά μοι  
δοκεῖ πυκνός τις καὶ σοφὸς γνώμην ἀνὴρ  
γνῶναι θεὸν θνητοῖσιν,

and τὸ θεῖον εἰσηγήσατο,<sup>2</sup> sufficed not only for antiquity but also for those modern theorists who, like Locke, imagined that language was produced artificially by wise men in counsel, or who, like Rousseau and the Encyclopædists, maintained that religions were framed by knaves to intimidate fools.

Cleophon demands a passing notice, because we learn from Aristotle<sup>3</sup> that he tried to reduce tragedy to the plain level of common life by using everyday language and not attempting to idealise his characters. The total destruction of his plays may be regretted, since it is probable that we should have observed in them the approximation of tragedy to comedy which ended finally in the new comic style of the Athenians. About Cleophon's contemporary, Nicomachus, of whom nothing is known except that he produced a great many tragedies on the stock subjects of mythology, nothing need be said. The case is somewhat different with a certain Diogenes who while writing seven tragedies under the decorous titles of *Thyestes*,

Cleophon,  
the Realist.

<sup>1</sup> "Then, I think,

A man of subtle counsel and keen wit  
Discovered God for mortals."

<sup>2</sup> "Introduced the notion of deity."

<sup>3</sup> *Poet. cap.* 2, 22; *Rhet.* iii. 7.

Diogenes,  
the obscene  
parodist.

*Helen, Medea*, and so forth, nevertheless contrived to offend against all the decencies of civilised life. Later grammarians can hardly find language strong enough to describe their improprieties. Here is a specimen: ἀρρήτων ἀρρήτοτερα καὶ κακῶν πέρα, καὶ οὔτε ὅτι φῶ περὶ αὐτῶν ἀξίως ἔχω . . . οὕτω πᾶσα μὲν αἰσχρότης, πᾶσα δὲ ἀπόνοια ἐν ἐκείναις τῷ ἀνδρὶ πεφιλοτέχνηται.<sup>1</sup> To ascribe these impure productions to Diogenes the Cynic, in spite of his well-known contempt for literature, was a temptation which even the ancients, though better informed than we are, could not wholly resist. Yet, after much sifting of evidence, it may be fairly believed that there were two Diogenes—the one an Athenian, who wrote an innocuous play called *Semele*, the other a native, perhaps, of Gadara, who also bore the name of Cœnomaus, and who perpetrated the seven indecent parodies. Diogenes of Sinope, meanwhile, was never among the poets, and the plays that defended cannibalism and blasphemed against the gods, though conceived in his spirit, belonged probably to a later period.<sup>2</sup>

Names of  
obscure  
tragedians.

Time would fail to tell of Antiphon and Polyeides, of Crates and Python, of Nearchus and Cleænetus, of the Syracusan Achæus and of Dikaiogenes, of Apollodorus and Timesitheus and Patrocles and Alkimenēs and Apollonius and Hippotheon and Timocles and Ecdōrus and Serapion—of all of whom it may be briefly said we know a few laborious nothings. Their names in a list serve to show how the sacred serpent of Greek tragedy, when sick to death, continued still for many generations drawing its slow length along. Down to the very end they kept on handling the old themes. Timesi-

<sup>1</sup> "More shameful than the shameful, and extravagant in naughtiness; so that I cannot find words strong enough to qualify them . . . in short, everything that is base and disgraceful has been elaborated by the man in those plays."

<sup>2</sup> The whole matter is too obscure for discussion in this place. Suffice it to add that a certain Philiscus, the friend and follower of Diogenes, enjoyed a portion of the notoriety attaching to the seven obnoxious dramas.

theus, for instance, exhibited *Danaides*, *Ixion*, *Memnon*, *Orestes*, and the like. Meanwhile a few pale shades emerge from the nebulous darkness, demanding more consideration than the mere recording of their names implies. We find two tyrants, to begin with, on the catalogue—Mamercus of Catana, who helped Timoleon, and Dionysius of Syracuse. Like Nero and Napoleon III., Dionysius was very eager to be ranked among the authors. He spared no expense in engaging the best rhapsodes of the day, and sent them to recite his verses at Olympia. To deceive a Greek audience in matters of pure æsthetics was, however, no easy matter. The men who came together attracted by the sweet tones of the rhapsodes, soon discovered the badness of the poems and laughed them down. Some fragments from the dramas of Dionysius have been preserved, among which is one that proves his preaching sounder than his practice:<sup>1</sup>—

The tyrants,  
Mamercus,  
Dionysius.

ἡ γὰρ τυραννὶς ἀδικίᾳς μήτηρ ἔφν.

The intrusion of professional orators into the sphere of the theatre might have been expected in an age when public speaking was cultivated like a fine art, and when opportunities for the display of verbal cleverness were eagerly sought. We are not, therefore, surprised to find Aphareus and Theodectes, distinguished rhetoricians of the school of Isocrates, among the tragedians. Of Theodectes a sufficient number of fragments survive to establish the general character of his style; but it is enough in this place to notice the fusion of forensic eloquence with dramatic poetry, against which Aristophanes had inveighed, and which was now complete.

Tragedies by  
rhetoricians.

Chærémon and Moschion are more important in the history of the Attic drama, since both of them attempted innovations in accordance with the literary spirit of their age, and did not, like the rhetoricians, follow merely in the footsteps of Euripides. Chærémon, the author of *Achilles*

Chærémon.

<sup>1</sup> "The rule of one man is of wrong the parent."

His euphu-  
ism.

*Thersitoctonos* and several other pieces, was mentioned by Aristotle for having attempted to combine a great variety of metres in a poem called *The Centaur*,<sup>1</sup> which was, perhaps, a tragi-comedy or *ἰλαροτραγῳδία*. He possessed remarkable descriptive powers, and was reckoned by the critics of antiquity as worthy of attentive study, though his dramas failed in action on the stage. We may regard him, in fact, as the first writer of plays to be read.<sup>2</sup> The metamorphoses through which the arts have to pass in their development, repeat themselves at the most distant ages and under the most diverse circumstances. It is, therefore, interesting to find that Chærêmon combined with this descriptive faculty a kind of euphuism which might place him in the same rank as Marini and Calderon, or among the most refined of modern Idyllists. He shrank, apparently, from calling things by their plain names. Water, for example, became in his fantastic phraseology *ποταμοῦ σῶμα* (the river's body). The flowers were "children of the spring," *ἔαρος τέκνα*—the roses, "nurslings of the spring," *ἔαρος τιθηνήματα*—the stars, "sights of the firmament," *αἰθέρος θεάματα*—ivy, "lover of dancers, youngling of the year," *χορῶν ἐραστῆς ἐνιαυτοῦ παῖς*—blossoms, "children of the meadows," *λειμώνων τέκνα*, and so forth. In fact, Chærêmon rivals Gongora, Lyly, and Herrick on their own ground, and by his numerous surviving fragments proves how impossible it is to conclude that the Greeks of even a good age were free from affectations. Students, who may be interested in tracing the declensions of classic style from severity and purity, will do well to read the seventeen lines preserved by Athenæus from the tragedy of *Æneus*.<sup>3</sup> They present a picture of girls playing in a field, too artful for successful rendering into any but insufferably ornate English.

The claim of Moschion on our attention is different from

<sup>1</sup> *Poet.* caps. 1, 24.

<sup>2</sup> See *Ar. Rhet.* iii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Athen.* xiii. p. 608a.

that of his contemporary Chærémon. He wrote a tragedy Moschion. with the title of *Themistocles*, wherein he appears to have handled the same subject-matter as Æschylus in the *Persæ*. The hero of Salamis was, however, conspicuous by his absence from the history-play of the elder poet. Lapse of time, by removing the political difficulties under which the *Persæ* was composed, enabled Moschion to make the great Themistocles his protagonist. Two fragments transmitted by Stobæus from this drama, the one celebrating Athenian liberty of speech, while the other argues that a small band may get the better of a myriad lances, seem to be taken from the *concio ad milites* of the hero :<sup>1</sup>—

καὶ γὰρ ἐν νάπαις βραχεῖ  
πολὺς σιδήρῳ κείρεται πείκης κλάδος,  
καὶ βαιὼς ὄχλος μυρίας λόγχης κρατεῖ.

Another tragedy of Moschion, the *Pheræi*, is interesting when compared with the *Antigone* of Sophocles and the *Sisyphus* ascribed to Critias. Its plot seems in some way to have turned upon the duty which the living owe the dead :<sup>2</sup>—

κεῖνδ' θανόντος ἀνδρὸς αἰκίζειν σκιάν·  
ζῶντας κολάζειν οὐ θανόντας εἰσεβές.

And, again, in all probability from the same drama :<sup>3</sup>—

τί κέρδος οὐκέτ' ὄντας αἰκίζειν νεκρούς;  
τί τὴν ἀναιδον γαίαν ὑβρίζειν πλέον;  
ἐπὴν γὰρ ἡ κρίνουσα καὶ θήδίουα

<sup>1</sup> "In far mountain vales  
See how one small axe fells innumerable firs;  
So a few men can curb a myriad lances."

<sup>2</sup> "'Tis vain to offer outrage to thin shades;  
God-fearers strike the living, not the dead."

<sup>3</sup> "What gain we by insulting mere dead men?  
What profit win taunts cast at voiceless clay?  
For when the sense that can discern things sweet

καὶ τάνιαρὰ φρουδὸς αἰσθησις φθαρή,  
τὸ σῶμα κωφοῦ τάξιν εἴληφεν πέτρον.

The origins  
of civil life.

A long quotation of thirty-four iambs, taken apparently in like manner from the *Pheræi*, sets forth the primitive condition of humanity. Men lived at first in caverns, like wild beasts. They had not learned the use of iron; nor could they fashion houses, or wall cities, or plough the fields, or garner fruits of earth. They were cannibals and preyed on one another. In course of time, whether by the teaching of Prometheus or by the evolution of implanted instincts, they discovered the use of corn, and learned how to press wine from the grape. Cities arose and dwellings were roofed in, and social customs changed from savage to humane. From that moment it became impiety to leave the dead unburied; but tombs were dug, and dust was heaped upon the clay-cold limbs, in order that the old abomination of human food might be removed from memory of men. The whole of this passage, very brilliantly written, condenses the speculations of Athenian philosophers upon the origin of civilisation, and brings them to the point which the poet had in view—the inculcation of the sanctity of sepulture.

Duration of  
the Attic  
tragic  
drama.

Nothing more remains to be said about the Attic tragedians. At the risk of being tedious, I have striven to include the names at least of all the poets who filled the tragic stage from its beginning to its ending, in order that the great number of playwrights and their variety might be appreciated. The probable date at which Thespis began to exhibit dramas may be fixed soon after 550 B.C. Moschion may possibly have lived as late as 300 B.C. These, roughly calculated, are the extreme points of time between which the tragic art of the Athenians arose and flourished and declined. When the Alexandrian critics attempted a general review of dramatic literature, they formed, as we have seen already, two classes

And things offensive is corrupt and fled,  
The body takes the rank of mere deaf stone."



of tragedians. In the first they numbered five Athenian worthies. The second, called the Pleiad, included seven poets of the Court of Alexandria; nor is there adequate reason to suppose that this inferior canon (*δευτέρα τάξις*) was formed on any but just principles of taste. How magnificent was the revival of art and letters, in all that pertained, at any rate, to scenic show and pompous ritual, during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus; how superbly the transplanted flowers of Greek ceremonial flourished on the shores of ancient Nile, and how Hellenic customs borrowed both gorgeous colours and a mystic meaning from the contact with Egyptian rites, may be gathered from the chapters devoted by Athenæus in the fifth book of the *Deipnosophistæ* to these matters. The Pleiad and the host of minor Alexandrian stars have fared, however, worse than their Athenian models. They had not even comic satirists to keep their names alive "immortally immerded." With the exception of Lycophron, they offer no firm ground for modern criticism. We only know that, in this Alexandrian Renaissance, literature, as usual, repeated itself. Alexandria, like Athens, had its royal poets, and, what is not a little curious, Ptolemy Philopator imitated his predecessor Dionysius to the extent of composing a tragedy, *Adonis*, with the same title and presumably upon the same theme.

Alexandrian  
tragedy, and  
the Pleiad.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ANCIENT AND MODERN TRAGEDY

Greek Tragedy and the Rites of Dionysus—A Sketch of its Origin and History—The Attic Theatre—The Actors and their Masks—Relation of Sculpture to the Drama in Greece—The Legends used by the Attic Tragedians—Modern Liberty in the Choice of Subjects—Mystery Plays—Nemesis—Modern Tragedy has no Religious Idea—Tragic Irony—Aristotle's Definition of Tragedy—Modern Tragedy offers no Katharsis of the Passions—Destinies and Characters—Female Characters—The Supernatural—French Tragedy—Five Acts—Bloodshed—The Unities—Radical Differences in the Spirit of Ancient and Modern Art.

Greek and  
romantic  
tragedy.

IN order to comprehend the differences between the ancient and the modern Drama—between the tragedy of Sophocles and the tragedy of Shakespeare—it is necessary to enter into the details of the history of the Attic stage. In no other department of art is the character of the work produced so closely dependent upon the external form which the artist had to adopt.<sup>1</sup>

Both the Tragedy and Comedy of the Greeks were intimately connected with the religious rites of Dionysus. Up to the very last, they formed a portion of the cultus of the

<sup>1</sup> Since this chapter was written, a great advance has been made in the study of the actual Greek theatre, the building, scenery, machinery, actors, etc. English readers may be referred to the excellent book upon this subject, called *The Attic Theatre*, by Mr. A. E. Haigh. At the same time the recently developed habit of performing Greek plays in our theatres or in the open air has enabled the public to acquire some more precise notion of what the dramatic art of Athens aimed at.

vintage-god, to whom the theatre was consecrated, and at whose yearly festivals the plays were acted. The Chorus, which originally formed the chief portion of the dramatic body, took its station at the altar of Bacchus in the centre of the theatre. Now the worship of Bacchus in Greece had from the first a double aspect—joyous and sorrowful. The joyous festivals were held in celebration of the vigour and the force of nature, in the spring and summer of the year; the sorrowful commemorated the sadness of the autumn and the winter. There were therefore two distinct branches of musical and choral art connected with the Dionysiac rites—the one jovial, the other marked by the enthusiasm of a wild grief. From the former of these, or the Revel Song, sprang Comedy; from the latter, or the Dithyramb, sprang Tragedy. Arion is named as the first great poet who cultivated the Dithyramb and wrote elaborate odes for recitation by the Chorus in their evolutions round the Bacchic altar. His Chorus were attired like Satyrs in goat-skins, to represent the woodland comrades of the god; hence came the name of Tragedy or Goat-song. At first the Dithyrambic Odes celebrated only the mystical woes of Dionysus: then they were extended so as to embrace minor mythical incidents connected with his worship; and at last the god himself was forgotten, and the tragic sufferings of any hero were chanted by the Chorus. This change is marked by an old tradition concerning Sicily, where it is said that the woes of the hero Adrastus were sung by the Bacchic choir, and that Cleisthenes, wishing to suppress the national mythology, restored the antique Dionysiac function. It also may explain the Greek proverb: "What has this to do with Dionysus?"—a question which might reasonably have been asked when the sacred representation diverged too widely from the line of Bacchic legend.

The religious cult of Dionysus.

Thus the original element of Greek Tragedy was the Dithyramb, as cultivated by Arion; and the first step in the

The dithyrambic chorus, and the actor.

progress of the dithyrambic chorus towards the Drama was the introduction of heroic legends into the odes. The next step was the addition of the Actor. It has been ingeniously conjectured that the actor was borrowed from the guild of Rhapsodes. The iambics of Archilochus and other poets were recited, as we know, at the feasts of Demeter, whose cult had points of similarity with that of Bacchus. It is not improbable that when the heroic element was added to the dithyramb, and the subjects handled by the professional reciters of the Homeric and Cyclic epics began to form a part of the Dionysiac celebration, a rhapsode was then introduced to help the Chorus in their office. That he declaimed iambics and not hexameters may be accounted for by the prevalence of the iambic in the sister-cult of Demeter. This then was the third step in the development of tragedy. To the dithyrambic chorus of Arion was added an interlocutor, who not only recited passages of narrative, but also exchanged speech with the Chorus, and who in course of time came to personate the hero whose history was being celebrated. Thus far had the art advanced in the age of Thespis. The Chorus stood and danced round the altar of Bacchus. The rhapsode, whom we now begin to call the actor, stood on a raised stage (*λογεῖον*) above them. The whole history of Greek tragedy exhibits a regular expansion of these simple elements. The function of the Chorus, the peculiar nature of the masks and dresses, and the very structure of the theatres, can only be explained by reference to this primitive constitution of the dramatic art.

Age of Thespis.

To Thespis the Athenian, whose first regular exhibition of the tragic show preceded the birth of Æschylus by about ten years, belongs the credit of having brought the various elements of tragedy into harmony, and of having fixed the outlines of the tragic art. The destruction of Athens by the Persian army, like the burning of London, which inflicted so severe an injury upon our early dramatic literature,

obliterated the monuments of the genuine Thespian tragedy. Some of the names of these dramas—*Pentheus*, *Phorbas*, *The Funeral Games of Pelias*, *The Priests*—have been preserved; from which we may conjecture that Thespis composed interludes with regular plots, combining choric passages and monologues uttered by the actor with elucidatory dialogues. His chorus was the traditional band of mummers clad in goat-skins—the *τράγοι* of the ancient Dionysiac festival. The poet himself was the actor, and his portion of the interlude was written either in iambic, or, as we may gather from a passage in the *Poetics* of Aristotle, in trochaic metre. The next great name after Thespis is Phrynichus, who composed a tragic interlude on the taking of Miletus by the Persians. This fact is important, since it proves that even at this early period a dramatist felt justified not merely in departing from the myths of Dionysus, but also in treating the events of contemporary history in his choric tragedy. The Athenians, however, were indignant at so abrupt a departure from usage, and at the unæsthetical exhibition of disasters which had recently befallen their race. They fined the poet, and confirmed their tragedians in the custom of handling only ancient and religious legends. It is well known that the single exception to this custom which has been preserved to us is the splendid triumph of Æschylus composed upon the ruin of the godless Xerxes. Phrynichus introduced one important change into the Thespian Drama: he established female characters. After him came Pratinas, who altered the old form of the Chorus. Hitherto, whatever may have been the subject of the play, the Bacchic *τράγοι* (goats) stood in their quaint goat-skins round the thymelé or altar of the god. Pratinas contrived that in future the Chorus should be attired to suit the action of the piece. If the play were written on the fall of Troy, for instance, they appeared as ancient Trojans; or if it had reference to the house of Laius, they came forth as senators of Thebes. At the same time special

Develop-  
ment of the  
Attic drama.

pieces for the traditional tragic chorus were retained, and these received the name of Satyric Dramas. Henceforth it was customary for a tragic author to produce at the same time three successive dramas on the subject he selected, together with a satyric play. The only essential changes which were afterwards made in Greek Tragedy, were the introduction of a second actor by Æschylus and of a third actor by Sophocles, the abandonment of the stricter rule of the tetralogy, and the gradual diminution of the importance of the Chorus. The choric element, which had been everything at the commencement, gave way to the dialogue, as the art of developing dramatic situations and characters advanced; until in the days of Euripides the Chorus formed a comparatively insignificant part of the tragic machinery. This curtailment of the function of the Chorus was a necessary consequence of progress in the art of exhibiting an imitation of human action and passion. Yet the Chorus never lost its place in Greek tragedy. It remained to mark the origin of the Drama, and as a symbol of the essentially religious purpose of the tragic spectacle.

Building  
of a stone  
theatre.

An event is said to have happened during the age of Pratinas which greatly influenced the future of the Attic Drama. The Thespian interludes had been acted on a wooden scaffolding. This fell down on one occasion, and caused so much alarm that the Athenians erected a permanent stone theatre, which they constructed on the south-east side of the Acropolis. Whether this old story is a fiction, and whether the time had not naturally arrived for a more substantial building, may admit of question. At any rate the new theatre was designed as though it were destined to exist for all time, as though its architects were prescient that the Attic Drama would become the wonder of the world. It contained 30,000 spectators, seated in semicircular tiers scooped out of the rock of the Acropolis. Their faces were turned towards Hymettus and the sea. The stage fronted the Acropolis: the

actors had in view the cliffs upon which stood the Parthenon and the gleaming statue of Protective Pallas. The whole was open to the air. Remembering these facts, we are enabled to understand the peculiar grandeur and propriety of those addresses to the powers of the earth and sky, to the temples of the gods, to the all-seeing sun and glittering ocean-waves, which are so common in Greek tragedy. The Athenian theatre was brought into close connection with all that was most brilliant in the architecture and the sculpture of Athens, with all that is most impressive in the natural environments of the city, with the very deities of the Hellenic worship in their visible manifestations to the senses of men. This circumstance alone determined many peculiarities of the Greek Drama, which make it wholly unlike our own. If the hero of a modern play, for instance, calls the sun to witness, he must point to a tissue-paper transparency in the centre of a painted scene: if he apostrophises ocean, he must turn towards a heaving mass of agitated canvas. But Ajax or Electra could raise their hands to the actual sun, gilding the statue of Athene with living rays; Prometheus, when he described the myriad laughter of the dimpling waves, knew that the sea was within sight of the audience; and sun and sea were regarded by the nation at large, not merely as phenomena of our universe, but as beings capable of sympathising with humanity in its distress. For the same reason nearly all the scenes of the Greek tragedies are laid in daytime and in the open air. The work of art exhibited an unparalleled combination of æsthetical definiteness with the actual facts of nature. The imagination is scarcely more wrought upon than the senses; whereas the tragedy of Shakespeare makes a direct appeal to the inner eye and to the highly stimulated fancy of the audience. It is generally before a temple or a palace that the action of a Greek play proceeds. Nor was there anything artificial in this custom; for the Greeks lived in the air of heaven, nor could events of such magnitude as those which

Importance  
of the Attic  
stage.

Modern  
theatres.

their tragedy represented, have been appropriately enacted beneath the shadow of a private roof. Far different were the conditions which the modern dramatist undertook to illustrate. The hesitations of Hamlet, the spiritual conflict of Faustus, the domestic sufferings of the Duchess of Malfi, are evolved with peculiar propriety within the narrow walls of palace-chambers, college-cells, and prisons or mad-houses. Scenery, in our sense of the word, was scarcely required by the Greeks. The name of a tragedy sufficed to determine what palace-gate was represented by the stage: the statue of a god was enough to show whose temple was intended. This simplicity of theatrical arrangement led to a corresponding simplicity of dramatic construction, to rarity of changes in the scene, and to the stationary character of Greek tragedy in general.

Arrange-  
ment of the  
Attic  
theatre.

Hollowed out of the hillside, the seats of the Athenian spectators embraced rather more than a full semicircle, and this large arc was subtended by a long straight line,—the *σκηνή* (*lit.* booth or tent), or background of the stage.<sup>1</sup> In front of this wall ran a shallow platform, not coextensive with the *skênê*, but corresponding to the middle portion of it. This platform was the stage proper. It was in fact a development of the Thespian *λογεῖον* (*lit.* speaking-place). The stage was narrow and raised from ten to twelve feet above the ground, to which a flight of steps led from it. On the stage, very long in proportion to its depth, all the action of the play took place: the actors entered it through three openings in the *skênê*, of which the central was larger and the two side ones smaller. When they stood upon the stage, they had not much room for grouping or for complicated action: they moved and stood like the figures in a bas-relief, turning their profiles to the audience, and so arranging their gestures that a continually harmonious series of figures was relieved upon the

<sup>1</sup> The *skênê* properly included the dressing-room for actors behind the stage.



background of the skênê. The central and side openings had doors capable of being thrown back and exhibiting a chamber, in which, at critical moments of the action, such spectacles as the murdered body of Agamemnon, or the suicide of Jocasta, were revealed to the spectators.<sup>1</sup> The chorus had their own allotted station in the centre of the whole theatre—the semi-circular pit left between the lowest tier of spectators and the staircase leading to the stage. In the middle of this pit or orchestra was placed the thymelé, or altar of Bacchus, round which the chorus moved on its first entrance, and where it stood while witnessing the action on the stage. The chorus entered by side passages leading from the back of the skênê, on a lower level than that of the stage: nor did they ever leave their orchestra to mount the stage and mingle with the actors. The dressing-rooms and offices of the theatre were concealed behind the skênê. Above the stage was suspended an aerial platform for the gods, while subterranean stairs were constructed for the appearance of ghosts ascending from the nether regions.

These details about the vast size of the theatre, its system of construction, and its exposure to the air, make it clear that no acting similar to that of the modern drama could have been possible on the Attic stage. Any one who has visited the Roman theatre of Orange, where the skênê is still in tolerable preservation, must have felt that a classical audience could not have enjoyed the subtle intonations of the voice and the delicate changes in the features, expressive of varying passions, which constitute the charm of modern acting. Our intricate and minute effects were out of the question. Everything in the Greek theatre had to be colossal, statuesque,

\*  
Æsthetic  
conditions  
and neces-  
sities of a  
Greek  
theatre.

<sup>1</sup> It is probable that this chamber was not discovered *behind* the stage-wall, but was a kind of platform wheeled on to the logeion from the rooms behind the skênê. Upon this movable platform appeared a group formed to represent the act which has just taken place and been described by the Messenger. This appears to be the real meaning of the so-called Ekkyklêma.

almost stationary. The Greeks had so delicate a sense of proportion and of fitness that they adjusted their art to these necessities. The actors were raised on thick-soled and high-heeled boots: they wore masks, and used peculiar mouth-pieces, by means of which their voices were made more resonant. The dresses which they swept along the stage, were the traditional costumes of the Bacchic festivals—brilliant and trailing mantles, which added volume to their persons. All their movements partook of the dignity befitting demigods and heroes. To suppose that these pompous figures were of necessity ridiculous would be a great mistake. Everything we know about Greek art makes it certain that in the theatre, no less than in sculpture and architecture, this nation of artists achieved a perfectly harmonious effect. How dignified, for example, were their masks, may be imagined from the sculptured heads of Tragedy and Comedy preserved in the Vatican—marble faces of sublime serenity, surmounted by the huge mass of curling hair, which was built up above the mask to add height to the figure. But in order to maintain the grandeur of these personages on the stage, it was necessary that they should never move abruptly or struggle violently. This is perhaps the chief reason why Greek Tragedy was so calm and so processional in character, why all its vehement action took place off the stage, why some of its most impassioned expressions of emotion were cadenced in elaborate lyrics with a musical accompaniment. An actor, mounted on his buskins, and carrying the weight of the tragic mask, could never have encountered a similar gigantic being in personal combat without betraying some awkwardness of movement or exhibiting some unseemly gesture. It was therefore necessary to create the part of the Messenger as an artistic correlative to the peculiarly artificial conditions of the stage. We find in the same circumstance a reason why the tragic situation was sustained with such intensity, why the action was limited to a short space of time and to a single locality, and why few

changes were permitted in the characters during the conduct of the same piece. For the mask depicted one fixed cast of features ; and though, as in the case of *Œdipus*, who tears out his eyes in a play of *Sophocles*, the actor might appear twice upon the stage with different masks, yet he could not be constantly changing them. Therefore the strong point of the Greek dramatist lay in the construction of such plots and characters as admitted of sustained and steady passion, whereas a modern playwright aims at providing parts which shall enable a great actor to exhibit lights and shades of varying expression. It still remains a problem how such parts as the *Cassandra* of *Æschylus* and the *Orestes* of *Euripides* could have been adequately acted with a mask to hide the features ; but such effects as those for which *Garrick*, *Rachel*, and *Talma* were celebrated would have been utterly impossible at *Athens*.

In order to form any conception of a Greek drama, we must imbue our minds with the spirit of Greek sculpture, and animate some frieze or bas-relief, supplying the accompaniment of simple and magnificent music, like that of *Gluck*, or like the recitatives of *Porpora*. *Flaxman's* designs for *Æschylus* are probably the best possible reconstruction of the scenes of a Greek tragedy, as they appeared to the eyes of the spectators, relieved upon the background of the *skênê*. *Schlegel* is justly indignant with those critics who affirm that the modern opera affords an exact parallel to the Greek drama. Yet the combination of music, acting, scenery, and dancing in such an opera as *Gluck's Orfeo* or *Cherubini's Medea*, may come nearer than anything else towards giving us a notion of one of the tragedies of *Euripides*. This remark must be qualified by the acknowledgment of a radical and fundamental difference between the two species of dramatic art. Music, dancing, acting, and scenery, with the Greeks, were sculptural, studied, stately ; with the moderns they are picturesque, passionate, mobile. If the opera at all resembles

Greek sculpture in relation to Greek drama.

the Greek drama, it is because of the highly artificial development of the histrionic art which it exhibits. The expression of passion in a stationary and prolonged aria, with which we are familiar in the opera, and which is far removed from nature, was of common occurrence in Greek Tragedy.<sup>1</sup>

The subject-matter of Greek tragedy.

So far we have been occupied with those characteristics of the ancient drama which were immediately determined by the external circumstances of the Attic stage. I have tried to show that some of the most marked qualities of the work of art were necessitated by the conditions of its form. But other and not less important points of difference between the ancient and the modern drama were due to the subject-matter of the former. The Greek playwrights confined themselves to a comparatively narrow circle of mythical stories; each in succession had recourse to Homer and to the poets of the Epic Cycle. Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, not to mention their numerous forgotten rivals, handled and re-handled the same themes. We have, for example, extant three tragedies, the *Choëphoræ* of Æschylus, the *Electra* of Sophocles, and the *Electra* of Euripides, composed upon precisely the same incident in the tale of Agamemnon's children. Modern dramatists, on the contrary, start with the whole stuff of human history; they seek out their subjects

<sup>1</sup> The scene in which Antigone takes leave of the Chorus within sight of her tomb is a good instance of this artificial treatment of passionate situations in the Attic Drama. It has been censured by some critics as being unreasonably protracted. In reality it is in perfect accordance with the whole spirit of Greek Tragedy. The emotions are brought into artistic relief: the figures are grouped like mourners on a sculptured monument: the antiphonal dirges of the princess and her attendants set the pulses of our sympathy in rhythmic movement, so that grief itself becomes idealised and glorified. The depth of feeling expressed, and the highly wrought form of its expression, together tend to rouse and chasten all that is profound and dignified in our emotions. Strophé after strophé, heart-beat by heart-beat, this wonderfully cadenced funeral song of her who is the bride of Acheron proceeds until the marble gates are shut upon Antigone.

where they choose, or invent motives with a view to the exhibition of varied character, force of passion, tragic effect; nor have they any fixed basis of solid thought like the doctrine of Nemesis whereon to rear their tragic superstructure. In this respect the Mystery Plays of the Catholic Church offer a close parallel to the Greek Drama. In these dramatic shows the whole body of Christian tradition—the Bible, the acts of the saints, and the doctrines of the Church about the Judgment and the final state of the soul—was used as the material from which to fashion sacred plays. But between the Mysteries and the early Attic tragedies there was one great point of difference. The sanctity of the Christian tradition, by giving an immovable form to the legends, precluded all freedom of the fancy. There could be no inventive action of the poet's mind when he was engaged in setting forth the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Atonement, or the final Judgment. His object was to instruct the people in certain doctrines, and all he could do was to repeat over and over again the same series of events in which God had dealt with man. Therefore, when the true dramatic instinct awoke in modern Europe, the playwrights had to quit this narrow sphere of consecrated thoughts. Miracle plays were succeeded by Moralities, by Histories, and by those unfettered creations of which Marlowe in England offered the first illustrious examples. Had the Thespian interludes been as purely didactic in their object as the early Mystery plays of the Church, we should either have possessed no Attic Drama at all or else have received from the Greek poets a very different type of tragedy. As it was, the very essence of Greek religion reached its culminating point in art. Epical mythology attained to final development in the free artistic creations of Sophocles. Meanwhile the dramatists were hampered in their choice of subjects by the artificial restraints imposed upon them. They were never at liberty to invent. They were always bound to keep in view the traditional inter-

Evolution of  
the modern  
drama.

pretation of legends to which a semi-religious importance attached.

Differences  
in the  
spiritual  
content  
of ancient  
and modern  
tragedy.

Many distinctions between the ancient and the modern drama may be deduced from this original difference in the sources of their materials. The conception of retributive justice pervades the whole tragedy of the Greeks; and the maintenance of this one animating idea is due no doubt in a great measure to the continued treatment of a class of subjects which not only remarkably exhibited its working, but which also were traditionally interpreted in its light. The modern drama has no such central idea. Our tragedy imports no dominant religious or moral conception into the sphere of art. Even Shakespeare and Goethe, the most highly moralised of modern dramatists, have been contented with bringing close before our eyes the manifold spectacle of human existence, wonderful and brilliant, from which we draw such lessons only as can be learned from life itself. They do not undertake, like the Greek tragedians, to supply the solution as well as the problem. It is enough for them to exhibit humanity in conflict, to enlist our sympathies on the side of what is noble, or to arouse our pity by the sight of innocence in misery. The struggle of Lear with his unnatural daughters, the death of Cordelia when the very doors of hope have just been opened; Desdemona dying by her husband's hand, without one opportunity of explanation; Imogen flouted as a faithless wife; Hamlet wrestling with Laertes in the grave of Ophelia; Juliet and Romeo brought by a mistake to death in the May-time of their love; Faust inflicting by his bitter gift of selfish passion woe after woe on Margaret and her family—these are the subjects of our tragedy. We have to content ourselves as we can with this “mask and antimask of impassioned life, breathing, moving, acting, suffering, laughing,” and to moralise it as we may. The case is different with Greek Tragedy. There we always learn one lesson—*τῷ δράσαντι παθεῖν*, the guilty must suffer.

It is only in a few such characters as Antigone or Polyxena that pure pathos seems to weigh down the balance of the law.

A minor consequence of the fixed nature of Attic Tragedy was that the dramatists calculated on no surprise in order to enlist the interest of their audience. The name, *Œdipus* or *Agamemnon*, informed the spectators what course the action of the play would take. The art of the poet therefore consisted in so displaying his characters, so preparing his incidents, and so developing the tragic import of the tale, as to excite attention. From this arose a peculiar style of treatment, and in particular that Irony of which so much is spoken. The point, for example, about the *Œdipus Tyrannus* was that the spectators knew his horrible story, but that he did not. Therefore, every word he uttered in his pride of prosperity was charged with sinister irony, was pregnant with doom. Every minute incident brought him nearer to the final crash, which all the while was ready waiting for him. In reading this tragedy of Sophocles we seem to be watching a boat full of careless persons gliding down a river, and gradually approaching its fall over a vast cliff. If we take interest in them, how terrible is our anxiety when they come within the irresistible current of the sliding water, how frightful is their cry of anguish when at last they see the precipice ahead, how horror-stricken is the silence with which they shoot the fall, and are submerged! Of this nature is the interest of a good Greek tragedy. But in the case of the modern drama all is different. When our Elizabethan ancestors went to the theatre to hear *Othello* for the first time, very few of them knew the story: as the play proceeded, they could not be sure whether Iago would finally prevail. At every moment the outcome was doubtful. Tragic irony is therefore not a common element in the modern drama. The forcible exhibition of a new and striking subject, the gradual development of passions in fierce conflict, the utmost amount of pathos accumulated round the victims of malice or ill-luck, exhaust

Source of  
Greek tragic  
irony.

the resources of the tragedian. The ancient dramatist plays with his cards upon the table : the modern dramatist conceals his hand. Euripides prefixed a prologue descriptive of the action to his pieces. Our tragedies open only with such scenes as render the immediate conduct of the play intelligible.

Purgation of  
the passions.

Aristotle's definition of tragedy, founded upon a vast experience, we need not doubt, of the best Greek dramas, offers another point of contrast between the ancient and the modern art. "Tragedy," he says, "is an imitation of an action that is weighty, complete, and of a proper magnitude ; it proceeds by action and not by narration ; and it effects through pity and terror a purgation of the like passions in the minds of the spectators." This definition, which has caused great difficulty for commentators, turns upon the meaning of the *κάθαρσις*,<sup>1</sup> or purgation, which Tragedy is supposed to effect. It is quite clear that *all* poetry which stirs the feelings of pity and terror need not at the same time purge them in or from the souls of the listeners, except only in so far as true art is elevating and purifying. Therefore Aristotle must have had some special quality of the Tragic art to which he was accustomed, in his mind. His words seem to express that it is the function of the Tragic Drama to appeal to our deepest sympathies and strongest passions, to arouse them, but at the same time to pacify them, and, as it were, to draw off the dangerous stuff that lies upon our soul,—to resolve the perturbation of the mind in some transcendental con-

<sup>1</sup> The word Katharsis may possibly have been borrowed from medicine by Aristotle, and his meaning may therefore be that the surplus of the passions of which he speaks is literally purged out of the mental system by the action of Tragedy. This suggestion was, I think, made by Bernays. It has been pointed out to me by my friend, Mr. E. Abbott of Balliol College, that Aristotle, in another passage of the *Poetics* (xvii. 8), uses the word in a lustral meaning. The reference to it in a weighty passage of the *Politics* (viii. 7, 4) seems to prove that the purification was for the individual, not, as Goethe thought, for the passions as exhibited in the work of art itself.



temptation.<sup>1</sup> This is what the greatest Greek Tragedies achieve. They are almost invariably closed by some sentence of the Chorus in which the unsearchableness of God's dealings is set forth, and by which we are made to feel that, after the fitful strife and fever of human wills, the eternal counsels of Zeus remain unchanged, while the moral order of the world, shaken and distorted by the passions of heroic sufferers, abides in the serenity of the Ideal. Furthermore, there is in the very substance of almost all Greek tragedies a more obvious healing of wounds and restoration of harmony than this. The Trilogy of Prometheus was concluded by the absorption of the Titan's vehement will in that of Zeus. The Trilogy of Orestes ends with the benediction of Pallas and Phœbus upon the righteous man who had redeemed the errors of his house. Sophocles allows us a glimpse of Antigone bringing peace and joy to her father and brothers in Hades. The old Œdipus, after his life-wanderings and crimes and woes, is made a blessed Dæmon through the mercy of propitiated deities. Hippolytus is reconciled to his father, and is cheered and cooled in his death-fever by the presence of the maiden Artemis. Thus the terror and pity which have been roused in each of these cases are allayed by the actual climax of the

Reconciliation  
of  
human and  
divine wills.

<sup>1</sup> Milton's description of the poet's function, in the *Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, contains a fine expansion of the phrase Katharsis in these words: "To allay the perturbation of the mind, and set the affections in right tune." Milton in his own *Samson Agonistes* followed the Greek usage closely, and concluded the whole drama with a choric reflection upon the wisdom of God's dealings with the race of men. There again he expresses in the very last words of his play the same doctrine of Katharsis:—

"His servants He, with new acquit  
Of true experience from this great event,  
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,  
And calm of mind, all passion spent."

Hegel, in his doctrine of the *Versöhnung*, or reconciliation of opposite passions in a contemplation which is above them and includes them, seems to have aimed at the same law as Aristotle.

Absence of  
Katharsis  
in modern  
tragedy.

plot which has excited them: grief itself becomes a chariot for surmounting the sources of grief. But the modern drama does not offer this Katharsis: its passions too often remain unreconciled in their original antagonism: the note on which the symphony terminates is not unfrequently discordant or exciting. Where is the Katharsis in *King Lear*? Are our passions purged in any definite sense by the close of the first part of *Faust*? We are rather left with the sense of inexpiable guilt and unalleviated suffering, with yearnings excited which shall never be quelled. The greatest works of modern fiction—the novels of Balzac, with their philosophy of wickedness triumphant; the novels of George Eliot, with their dismal lesson of the feebleness of human effort; the tragedies of Shakespeare, with the silence of the grave for their conclusion—intensify and embitter that “struggle to be what we are not, and to do what we cannot” which Hazlitt gives as an equivalent for life.<sup>1</sup> The greatest creative poet of this generation writes ἀνάγκη (Necessity) upon his title-page. The chief poet of the century makes his hero exclaim:—

“Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren.”

Such purification of the passions as modern art achieves, is to be found most eminently in the choric movements of Handel, in the symphonies of Beethoven, in all the great achievements of music. Ancient art aimed at the perfect within definite limits, because human life in the ancient world was circumscribed by mundane limitations, and its conditions were unhesitatingly accepted. Our art aims at the infinite, because we are for ever striving after a completion which cannot be attained. It was not for nothing that Christianity, with its

<sup>1</sup> In the Greek Drama the notion of Fate was primarily theological: the hero was conducted to his end by gods. In Shakespeare Fate is psychological; Hamlet's own character is his destiny. In Goethe, Victor Hugo, and George Eliot the conception of Fate has passed into the region of Positivism: the laws of blood, society, and race rule individuals in the *Elective Affinities*, *Les Misérables*, the *Spanish Gypsy*.

widening of spiritual horizons, closed the ancient and inaugurated the modern age :—

“ Une immense espérance a traversé la terre ;  
Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut lever les yeux.”

In that fixed mood of restless expectation, in that persistent attitude of the soul upraised to sweep the heavens, there lies the secret of modern art. Life to the Greek belonged to the category of τὸ πέρας (the defined) : it was like a crystal in its well-defined consistency. Our life, whether we regard it from the point of view of science or of religion, belongs to the ἄπειρον (the indefinite) : it is only one term of an infinite series, the significance whereof is relative to the unknown quantities beyond it. Consequently modern art is nowhere satisfied with merely æsthetic forms. The soul with its maladies imperiously demands expression. Michael Angelo was not contented, like Pheidias or Praxiteles, with carving the serenity of godlike men and women. In the figures upon the tombs of the Medici he fashioned four moods of the tortured, aching, anguished soul, to whom the burden of this life is all but intolerable. His frescoes in the Sistine Chapel are subordinated to the expression of one thought—the doom of God which will descend upon the soul of man. Christianity destroyed beyond all possibility of reconstruction the free, frank, sensuality of Paganism. It convicted humanity of sin, and taught men to occupy themselves with the internal warfare of their flesh and spirit as that which is alone eternally important. Life itself, according to the modern formula, is a conflict which will be concluded one way or the other beyond the grave. Meanwhile upon this earth the conflict is undetermined. Therefore art, which reflects life, represents the battle, and dares not to anticipate its outcome. In this relation the very pathology of the soul becomes poetic. Ἐρᾶν ἀδυνάτων, said the Greek proverb, νόσος τῆς ψυχῆς—“to desire impossible things is a disease of the

The unrest  
of the  
modern  
soul.

Modern  
mythic  
legends.

soul." But *l'amour de l'impossible*—the straining of the soul after the infinite, the desire to approximate in this world to a dream of the ecstatic fancy—all the rapture of saints, the self-denial of solitaries, the death in life of penitents—is not defined by us as a disease. On the contrary, this passion for the impossible has been held through many centuries of modern history to be the truest sign of the soul's health; and even where such superstition has not penetrated, poets like Byron have prided themselves upon the same temper displayed in their extravagant yearnings. Don Juan, enormous in his appetite for pleasure, and rebellious on the grave's brink beneath the hand of God; Faust, insatiable of curiosity, and careless of eternity in his lust for power; Tannhäuser, pursuing to the end his double life of love too sweet to be abandoned and of conscience too acutely sensitive to be stilled; these are our modern legends.<sup>1</sup> These, with so little of mere action in them, so much of inner meaning and mental experience, yield the truest materials to our artists. Over and over again have Faust, Tannhäuser, and Don Juan supplied the poet with subjects wherein no merely local or temporary tragedy is set forth, but the destiny of the modern man is shown as in a magic mirror. Nor has the advent of science as yet restored our mind to that "passionless Bride, divine Tranquillity," which the Greeks enjoyed, and which alone could be the mother of such art as the antique. Although the sublime cheerfulness of Goethe shows by way of forecast how the scientific mood may lead to this result hereafter, for the present at any rate science has deepened and complicated our most distressing problems, has rendered the anxiety of man about his destiny still more cruel, has made him still more helpless in the effort to comprehend his relations to

<sup>1</sup> A contemporary German writer of distinction, Prince Emil von Carolath Schönaich, has in his poem on Don Juan's death invented a splendid allegory, whereby both Faust and Don Juan are imaged as the sons begotten by the Wandering Jew upon the exiled goddess Venus.

the Universe, by seeming to prove that his most cherished hypotheses are mere illusions. Like a spoiled child, who has been taught to expect too much, to think about himself too much, and to rely too much on flattery, humanity, shrinking from the cold calm atmosphere of science, still cries in feverish accents with St. Paul: "If Christ be not risen, then are we of men most wretched!" How strange would that sentence have sounded to Sophocles! How well it suits the tragedy of Shakespeare, which has for its ultimate *Versöhnung* the hope, felt, though unexpressed, of St. Paul's exclamation!

As a corollary to what has hitherto been said about the differences between the drama of Sophocles and that of Shakespeare it follows that the former aims at depicting the destinies, and the latter the characters of men.<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare exhibits individual wills and passions clashing together and producing varied patterns in the web of life. Sophocles unfolds schemes and sequences of doomed events, where individuals wills and passions play indeed their part, but where they are subordinated to the idea which the tragedian undertakes to illustrate. A play of Æschylus or Sophocles strikes us by the grandeur of the whole: a play of Shakespeare or Goethe overwhelms us by the force and frequency of combined and interacting motives. No analysis can be too searching or acute for the profound conception which pervades the *Oresteia*

Destinies  
and char-  
acters.

<sup>1</sup> Character in a Greek play is never so minutely anatomised as in a modern work of fiction. We do not actually see the secret workings of the mainsprings of personality. We judge a hero of Sophocles by his actions and by his relations to other men and women more than by his soliloquies or by scenes specially constructed to expose his qualities. In this respect Greek Tragedy again resembles Greek sculpture. As in their sculpture the Greek artists felt the muscular structure of the human frame with exquisite sensibility, while they did not obtrude it upon the spectator; so in their tragedy the poets preferred to exhibit the results rather than to lay bare the process of mental and emotional activity. The modern tragedian shifts his ground somewhat, but he chooses an equally legitimate province of poetry when he discloses the inmost labyrinths in the character of a Hamlet or a Faust.

of Æschylus; but there is no single character in Æschylus or in Sophocles so worthy of minute investigation as that of Hamlet or of Faust. If a critic looks to the general effect of a tragedy, to the power of imagination displayed in its conception as a single work of art, he will prefer the *Agamemnon* to *Macbeth*; but if he seek for the creation of a complete and subtle human soul, he will abandon Clytemnestra for the Thane of Cawdor's wife. The antique drama aims at the presentation of tragic situations, determined and controlled by some mysterious force superior to the agents. The modern aims at the presentation of tragic situations, immediately produced and brought about by the free action of the *dramatis personæ*.

Modern development of female character.

One advantage which the modern dramatist has over the ancient is that he may introduce very numerous persons in concerted action without the danger of confusion, and that of these many may be female. It has been ingeniously argued by De Quincey that the Attic tragedians had small opportunity of studying the female character, and that it would have been indecorous for them to have painted women with the perfect freedom of a Cleopatra or a Vittoria Corombona.<sup>1</sup> Consequently their women are either superficially and slightly sketched like Ismene and Chrysothemis; or else they are marked by something masculine, as in the case of Clytemnestra and Medea; or again they move our sympathy not by the perfection of their womanliness but by the exhibition of some simple and sublime self-sacrifice—notable examples being the filial devotion of Antigone, the sisterly affection of Electra, the uncomplaining submission of Iphigeneia and Polyxena, the wifely self-abandonment of Alcestis, the almost frigid acquiescence in death of Makaria. The later Greek drama, and especially the drama of Euripides, abounded in these

<sup>1</sup> This seems to have been the gist of one of the grudges of Aristophanes against Euripides, as I have indicated above, p. 34. He made the love of Sthenobœa, the vengeance of Medea, too interesting.

characters. They are incarnations of certain moral qualities. Like the masks which concealed the actor's face, they show one fixed and sustained mood of emotion: we find in them no hesitancy and difficult resolve, no ebb and flow of wavering inclination, but one immutable, magnificent, heroic fixity of purpose. In a word, they are conformed to the sculptural type of the Greek tragic art.

Owing to the very structure of the Attic stage, Greek tragedy could never have recourse to those formless, vague, and unsubstantial sources of terror and of charm which the modern dramatist has at his command. How could such airy nothings as the elves of the *Tempest*, the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the witches of *Macbeth* have been brought upon that colossal theatre in the full blaze of an Athenian noon? Figures of Thanatos and of Lyssa did indeed appear: the ghost of Clytemnestra roused the sleeping Furies in the courts of Delphi: the phantom of Darius hovered over his grave. But these spectres were sculpturesque—such as Pheidias might have carved in marble, and such as we see painted on so-called Etruscan vases. They were not Banquo-apparitions gliding into visible substance from the vacant gloom and retiring thitherward again. When such creatures of the diseased imagination had to be suggested, the seer, like Cassandra, before whose eyes the phantoms of the children of Thyestes passed, or Orestes, who drew his arrows upon an unseen cohort of threatening fiends, stared on vacancy. Shakespeare dares at times to realise such incorporeal beings, to give to them a voice and a visible form. Yet it may be doubted whether even in his tremendous supernatural apparatus the voice which shrieked to Macbeth "Sleep no more!" the mutterings of Lady Macbeth in her somnambulism, the spectre which Hamlet saw and his mother could not see, the dream of Clarence with its cry of injured ghosts, are not really the most appalling.

The supernatural in Greek tragedy.

The Greek drama owed its power to the qualities of regu-

Formal differences of Greek and modern dramatic art.

larity and simplicity: the strength of the modern lies in subtlety and multiplicity. The external conditions of the Attic theatre no less than the prevailing spirit of Greek tragic art forced this simplicity and regularity upon the ancient dramatists. These conditions do not occur in the modern world. We have our little theatres, our limited audience, our unmasked actors, our scenical illusions, our freedom in the choice of subjects. Therefore to push the subtlety and multiplicity of tragic composition to the utmost—to arrange for the most swift and sudden changes of expression in the actor, for the most delicate development of a many-sided character, for the most complicated grouping of contrasted forms, and for the utmost realisation of imaginative incidents—is the glory of a Shakespeare or a Goethe. The French dramatists made the mistake of clinging to the beggarly elements of the Attic stage, when they had no means of restoring its colossal grandeur. When it was open to them to rival the work of the ancients in a new and truly modern style, they hampered their genius by arbitrary rules, and thought that they were following the principles of the highest art, while they submitted to the mere necessities of a bygone form of presentation. If Racine had believed in Nemesis, if Versailles had afforded him a theatre and an audience like that of Athens, if his actors had worn masks, if sculpture had been the dominant art of modern Europe, he would have been following the right track. As it was, he became needlessly formal. The same blind enthusiasm for antiquity led to the doctrine of the unities, to the abstinence from bloodshed on the stage, and to the restriction of a play to five acts. Horace had advised a dramatist not to extend his tragedy beyond the fifth act, nor to allow Medea to murder her children within sight of the audience. All modern playwrights observe the rule of five acts: nor is there much to be said against it, except that the third act is apt to be languid for want of matter. But the Greeks disregarded this division: judging by the choric songs, we find that some of



their tragedies have as many as seven, and some as few as two acts. Again, as to bloodshed on the stage, it is probable that if the Greek actors had not been so clumsily arrayed, we should have had many instances of their violation of this rule. *Æschylus* discloses the shambles where *Agamemnon* and *Cassandra* lie weltering in their blood, and hammers a stake through the body of *Prometheus*. *Sophocles* exhibits *Œdipus* with eyes torn out and bleeding on his cheeks. *Euripides* allows the mangled corpse of *Astyanax* to be brought upon the stage in his father's shield. There is nothing more ghastly in an actual murder than in these spectacles of slaughter and mutilation. With reference to the unities, the French critics demand that a drama shall proceed in the same place, and the playwrights are at infinite pains to manage that no change of scene shall occur. But *Aristotle*, whose authority they claim, is silent on the point; while the usage of the Greek Drama shows more than one change of place,—especially in the *Ajax* of *Sophocles*, and in the *Eumenides* of *Æschylus*, where the scene is shifted from the temple of *Phœbus* at *Delphi* to the *Areopagus* at *Athens*. Still the exigencies of the Greek theatre made it advisable to alter the centre of action as little as possible; and as a matter of convenience this requirement was complied with. The circumstances of our own stage have removed this difficulty, and it is only on the childish principle of maintaining an impossible illusion that the unity of place can be observed with any propriety. The unity of time has more to say for itself. *Aristotle* remarks that it is better to have a drama completed within the space of a day: this rule flows from his just sense of the proportion of parts; a work of art ought to be such that the mind can easily comprehend it at a glance. Yet many Greek plays, such as the *Agamemnon* of *Æschylus*, where *Agamemnon* has time to return from *Troy*, or the *Eumenides*, where *Orestes* performs the journey from *Delphi* to *Athens*, disregard this rule in cases where it required no strain of the mind to bridge over the space of a

Bloodshed  
on the stage.

Unity of  
place.

Unity of  
time.

Unity of  
action.

few unimportant days or hours. When in the modern drama we are introduced to the hero of a play first as a child and then as a full-grown man, and are forced meanwhile to keep our attention on his acts in the interval as important to the dramatic evolution, there is a gross violation of æsthetical unity. About the unity of action all critics are agreed. It is the same as unity of interest, or unity of subject, the interest and the subject of a play being its action. A good tragedy must have but one action, just as a good epic or a good poem of any sort must have but one subject; for the simple reason that, as the eye cannot look at two things at once, so the mind cannot attend to two things at once. Modern poets have been apt to disregard this canon of common sense: the underplots of many plays and the episodes of such epics as the *Orlando* of Ariosto are not sufficiently subordinated to the main design or interwoven with it. Aristotle is also right in saying that the unity of the hero is not the same as the unity of action: a play, for example, on the labours of Hercules could only be made a good drama if each labour were shown to be one step in the fulfilment of one divinely appointed task. Shakespeare has complied with the canon of the unity of action in all his tragedies. Whether Goethe has done so in *Faust* may admit of doubt. The identity of his hero seems to him sufficient for the tragic unity of his piece: yet he has given us another centre of interest in Margaret, whose story is but a mere episode in the experience of Faust. Unity of action in a tragedy, the very soul of which is action, is the same as organic coherence in a body; and therefore, as every work of art ought, according to the energetic metaphor of Plato, to be a living creature, with head, trunk and limbs all vitalised by one thought, this unity is essential. Admitting this point, we may fairly say that the other rules of French dramatic criticism are not only arbitrary but also founded on a mistake with regard to the Greek theatre and a misapprehension of the proper functions of the modern stage. Composing in obedience

to them is like walking upon stilts in a country where there are no marshes to make the inconvenience necessary.

In this review of the differences between our own tragedy and that of the Greeks I have scarcely touched upon those primary qualities which differentiate all modern from ancient art. The "sentiment of the infinite," which Renan regards as the chief legacy of mediævalism to modern civilisation, and the preoccupation with the internal spirit rather than the external form which makes Music the essentially modern, as Sculpture was the essentially ancient art, are causes of innumerable peculiarities in our conception of tragedy. I have hardly alluded to these, but have endeavoured to show that the immersion of Greek Tragedy in religious ideas, the fixed body of mythical matter handled by the Greek dramatists in succession, and the actual conditions of the Attic theatre will account for the greater number of those characteristics which distinguish Sophocles from Shakespeare, the prince of Greek from the prince of modern tragic poets.

The Middle Ages.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ARISTOPHANES

Heine's Critique on Aristophanes—Aristophanes as a Poet of the Fancy—The Nature of his Comic Grossness—Greek Comedy in its Relation to the Worship of Dionysus—Greek Acceptance of the Animal Conditions of Humanity—His Burlesque, Parody, Southern Sense of Fun—Aristophanes and Menander—His Greatness as a Poet—Glimpses of Pathos—His Conservatism and Serious Aim—Socrates, Agathon, Euripides—German Critics of Aristophanes—Ancient and Modern Comedy—The *Birds*—The *Clouds*—Greek Youth and Education—The Allegories of Aristophanes—The *Thesmophoriazusæ*—Aristophanes and Plato.

Heine's  
description.

"A DEEP idea of world-destruction (*Weltvernichtungsidee*<sup>1</sup>) lies at the root of every Aristophanic comedy, and, like a fantastically ironical magic tree, springs up in it with blooming ornament of thoughts, with singing nightingales, and climbing, chattering apes." This is a sentence translated from the German of Heinrich Heine, who, of all poets, was the one best fitted to appreciate the depth of Aristophanes, to pierce beneath his smiling comic mask, and to read the underlying *Weltvernichtungsidee* with what he calls its "jubilee of death and fireworks of annihilation." Perhaps, as is common with German writers of imagination, Heine pushes his point too far, and insists with too much force upon the "jubilee of death," "the fireworks of annihilation." The strong wine of his own

<sup>1</sup> It is almost impossible to translate this word, which will frequently recur in the chapter, and which seems to depend for its force upon the conception of the satiric spirit, as that which "stets vernichtet," the Mephistophilistic "verneinender Geist."

paradox intoxicates his judgment, and his taste is somewhat perverted by the Northern tendency to brood upon the more fantastic aspects of his subject. It is not so much Aristophanes himself whom Heine sees, as Aristophanes reflected in the magic mirror of his own melancholy and ironical fancy. Yet, after making these deductions, the criticism I have quoted seems to me to be the proper preface to all serious study of the greatest comic poet of the world. It strikes the true keynote, and tunes our apprehension to the right pitch; for, in approaching Aristophanes, we must divest our minds of all the ordinary canons and definitions of comedy: we must forget what we have learned from Plautus and Terence, from Molière and Jonson. No modern poet, except perhaps Shakespeare and Calderon in parts, will help us to understand him. We must not expect to find the gist of Aristophanes in vivid portraits of character, in situations borrowed from everyday life, in witty dialogues, in carefully constructed plots arriving at felicitous conclusions. All these elements, indeed, he has; but these are not the main points of his art. His plays are not comedies in the sense in which we use the word, but scenic allegories, Titanic farces in which the whole creation is turned upside down; transcendental travesties, enormous orgies of wild fancy and unbridled imagination; Dionysiac dances in which tears are mingled with laughter, and fire with wine; Choruses that, underneath their oceanic merriment of leaping waves, hide silent deeps of unstirred thought. If Coleridge was justified in claiming the German word *Lustspiel* for the so-called comedies of Shakespeare, we have a far greater right to appropriate this wide and pregnant title to the plays of Aristophanes. The brazen mask which crowns his theatre smiles indeed broadly, serenely, as if its mirth embraced the universe; but its hollow eye-sockets suggest infinite possibilities of profoundest irony. Buffoonery carried to the point of paradox, wisdom disguised as insanity, and gaiety concealing the whole sum of human disappointment, sorrow, and disgust, seem ready

Peculiarities  
of the Aristophanic  
genius.

to escape from its open but rigid lips, which are moulded to a proud perpetual laughter. It is a laughter which spares neither god nor man—which climbs Olympus only to drag down the immortals to its scorn, and trails the pall of august humanity in the mire; but which, amid its mockery and blasphemy, seems everlastingly asserting, as by paradox, that reverence of the soul which bends our knees to heaven and makes us respect our brothers. There is nothing sinister or even serious in Aristophanes. He did not write in the sarcastic, cynical old age of his nation or his era. He is rather the voice of its superabundant youthfulness: his genius is like a young man, sporting in his scorn of danger with the thought of death; like Achilles, in the sublimity of his beauty, mimicking the gestures of Thersites. Nor, again, are his thoughts shaded down, concealed, wrapped up in symbols. On the contrary, the very “Weltvernichtungsidee” of which Heine speaks, leaps forth and spreads its wings beneath the full blaze of Athenian noonday, showing a glorious face, as of sculptured marble, and a comely person unashamed. It is not the morbid manifestation of sour secretions and unnatural juices, but the healthy product of keen vitality and perfectly harmonious functions. Into the clear light his paradoxes, and his irony, and his unblushing satire spring like song-birds rejoicing in their flight.

Splendour  
of lyrical  
poetry.

Then, again, how miraculously beautiful are “the blooming ornament of thoughts,” “the nightingales and climbing apes,” of which we spoke! No poet—not even Shelley—has exceeded the choruses of the *Birds* and *Clouds* in swiftness, radiance, and condensed imagination. Shakespeare alone, in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Tempest*; or Calderon, in some of his allegorical dramas, carries us away into the same enchanted land, where the air is purer and the skies seem larger than in our world; where the stars burn with treble lustre, and where the flowers harbour visible spirits—elves and Ariels clinging to the branches, and dazzling fireflies tangled in the meadow-grass

beneath our feet. Nor is it only by this unearthly splendour of visionary loveliness that Aristophanes attracts us. Beauty of a more mundane and sensual sort is his. Multitudes of brilliant ever-changing figures fill the scene; and here and there we find a landscape or a piece of music and moonlight glowing with the presence of the vintage god. Bacchic processions of young men and maidens move before us, tossing inspired heads wreathed with jasmine flowers and wet with wine. The Mystæ in the meadows of Elysium dance their rounds with the clash of cymbals and with madly twinkling snow-white feet. We catch glimpses at intervals of Athenian banquets, of midnight serenades, of the palæstra with its crowd of athletes, of the Panathenaic festival as Pheidias carved it, of all the busy rhythmic coloured life of Greece.

The difficulty of treating Aristophanes in an essay is twofold. Difficulty of  
treating  
Aristo-  
phanes. There are first of all those obstacles which every writer on so old a subject has to meet. Aristophanes, like all Greek poets, has been subjected to prolonged and most minute criticism. He has formed a part of classical education for centuries, and certain views about his poetry, substantially correct, have become a fixed element in our literary consciousness. Thus every fresh writer on the old comedy of Athens must take a good deal of knowledge for granted in his readers—but what, and how much, he hardly knows. He may expect them to be acquainted with the details furnished by scholars like Donaldson about the times at which comedies were exhibited, the manner of their presentation on the stage, and the change from the old to the middle and new periods. He may suppose that they will know that Aristophanes stood in the same relation to Cratinus as Sophocles to Æschylus; that the *Clouds* had not so much to do with the condemnation of Socrates as some of the later Greek gossips attempted to make out; that Aristophanes was conservative in politics, philosophy, and literature, vehemently opposing the demagogues, the sophists, and Euripides. Again, he may, or rather he must, avoid the ground

which has been so well trodden by Schlegel, Müller, and Mitchell, in their familiar criticisms of Aristophanes: and he may content himself with a passing allusion to Grote's discussion of the *Clouds*. But though, from this point of view, Aristophanes is almost stale from having been so much written about and talked about and alluded to—though in fact there is a *prima facie* obligation imposed on every one who makes his plays the subject of fresh criticism to pretend at least to some originality of view or statement—still Aristophanes has never yet been fairly dealt with or submitted to really dispassionate consideration. Thus he shares in common with all poets of antiquity the disabilities of being hackneyed, while he has the peculiar and private disability of never having been really appreciated at his worth except by a few scholars and enthusiastic poets. The reason for this want of intelligence in the case of Aristophanes is not hard to see. First of all, his plays are very difficult. Their allusions require much learned illustration. Their vocabulary is copious and rare. So that none but accomplished Grecians or devoted students of literature can hope to read him with much pleasure to themselves. In a translation his special excellence is almost unrecognisable. Next—and this is the real reason why Aristophanes has been unfairly dealt with, as well as the source of the second class of difficulties which meet his interpreters—it is hard for the modern Christian world to tolerate his freedom of speech and coarseness. Of all the Greeks, essentially a nude nation, he is the most naked—the most audacious in his revelation of all that human nature is supposed to seek to hide. The repugnance felt for his ironical *insouciance* and for his profound indelicacy has prevented us from properly valuing his poetry. Critics begin their panegyrics of him with apologies; they lift their skirts and tread delicately, passing over his broadest humour *sicco pede*, picking their way among his heterogeneous images, winking and blinking, hesitating and condoning, omitting a passage here, attempting to soften an

Abstruse-  
ness and  
obscenity.



allusion there, until the real Aristophanes has almost disappeared. Yet there is no doubt that this way of dealing with our poet will not do. The time has come at which any writer on Greek literature, if not content to pass by Aristophanes in silence, must view him as he is, and casting aside for a moment at least the veil of modern propriety, must be prepared to admit that this great comic genius was "far too naked to be shamed."

So important is this point in the whole of its bearing upon Aristophanes, that I may perhaps be allowed to explain the peculiar position which he occupies, and, without seeking to offer any exculpation for what offends us in the moral sensibilities of the Greeks, to show how such a product as the comedy of Aristophanes took root and grew in Athens. His plays, I have already said, are not comedies in the modern sense, but Lustspiele—fantastic entertainments, debauches of the reason and imagination. The poet, when he composed them, knew that he was writing for an audience of Greeks, inebriated with the worship of the vintage god, ivy-crowned, and thrilling to the sound of orgiastic flutes. Therefore, we who read him in the cool shades of modern Protestantism, excited by no Dionysiac rites, forced to mine and quarry at his jests with grammar, lexicon, and commentary, unable, except by the exercise of the historical imagination, to conceive of a whole nation agreeing to honour its god by frantic license, must endeavour to check our natural indignation, and by no means to expect from Aristophanes such views of life as are consistent with our sober mood. We cannot, indeed, exactly apply to the case of Aristophanes those clever sophistries by which Charles Lamb defended the comic poets of our Restoration, when he said that they had created an unreal world, and that, allowing for their fictitious circumstances, the perverse morality of their plays was not only pardonable but even necessary. Yet it is true that his audacious immodesty forms a part of that Weltvernichtungsidee, of that total upturn and Titanic revolution in

The Dionysiac enthusiasm.

the universe, which he affects ; and so far we may plead in his defence, and in the defence of the Athenian spectators, that his comedies were consciously exaggerated in their coarseness, and that beyond the limits of the Dionysiac festival their jokes would not have been tolerated. To use a metaphor, his plays were offered as a sacrifice upon the thymelé or orchestral altar of that Bacchus who was sire by Aphrodité of Priapus : this potent deity protected them ; and the poet, as his true and loyal priest, was bound, in return for such protection, to represent the universe at large as conquered by the madness of intoxication, beauty, and desire. Thus the Aristophanic comedies are in one sense a radiant and pompous show, by which the genius of the Greek race chose, as it were in bravado, to celebrate an apotheosis of the animal functions of humanity ; and from this point of view we may fairly accept them as visions, Dionysiac day-dreams, from which the nation woke and rose and went about its business soberly, until the Bacchic flutes were heard again another year.

Religious  
origin of  
Greek  
comedy.

On the religious origin of Greek comedy some words may perhaps be reckoned not out of place in this connection. It has frequently been pointed out to what a great extent the character of the Aristophanic comedy was determined by its sacred nature, and by the peculiar condition of semi-religious license which prevailed at Athens during the celebration of the festival of Bacchus. We know that much is tolerated in a Roman or Venetian carnival which would not be condoned at other seasons of the year. Yet the Italian carnival, in its palmiest days, must have offered but a very poor and frigid picture of what took place in Athens at the Dionysia ; nor was the expression of the crudest sensuality ever thought agreeable to any modern saint. That the Greeks most innocently and simply wished to prove their piety by these excesses is quite clear. Aristophanes himself, in the *Acharnians*, gives us an example of the primitive Phallic hymn, which formed the nucleus of comedy in its rudest stage. The refrain of *φᾶλῆς*,

ἑταῖρε Βακχίου, ξύγκωμε, νυκτεροπλάνητε μοιχέ, sufficiently indicates its nature. Again the Choruses of the *Mystæ* in the *Frogs* furnish a still more brilliant example of the interminglement of debauchery with a spirit of true piety, of sensual pleasure with pure-souled participation in divine bliss. Their hymns to Iacchus and Demeter alternate between the holiest strains of praise and the most scurrilous satire. At one time they chant the delights of the meadows blooming with the rose; at another they raise cries of jubilant intoxication and fierce frenzy. In the same breath with the utterance of sensual passion, they warn all profane persons and impure livers to avoid their rites, and boast that for them alone the light of heaven is gladsome who have forsworn impiety and preserved the justice due to friends and strangers. We must imagine that this Phallic ecstasy, if we may so name it, had become, as it were, organised and reduced to system in the Aristophanic Lustspiel. It permeates and gives a flavour to the comic style long after it has been absorbed and superseded by the weightier interests of developed art. This ecstasy implied a profound sympathy with nature in her large and perpetual reproductiveness, a mysterious sense of the sexuality which pulses in all members of the universe and reaches consciousness in man. It encouraged a momentary subordination of the will and intellect and nobler feelings to the animal propensities, prompting the same race which had produced the sculptures of the Parthenon, the tragedies of Æschylus, the deeds of Pericles and Leonidas, the self-control of Socrates, the thought of Plato, to throw aside its royal mantle of supreme humanity, and to proclaim in a gigantic work of art the irreconcilable incongruity which exists between the physical nature and the spirit of the man, when either side of the antithesis is isolated for exclusive contemplation. We need not here point out how far removed was the Phallic ecstasy from any prurient delight in licentious details, or from the scientific analysis of passions. Nor, on the other hand,

Nature of  
Greek ani-  
malism.

Christian  
ethics.

need we indicate the vein of a similar extravagant enthusiasm in Oriental poetry. It is enough to remember that it existed latent in all the comic dramas of the earlier period, throbbing through them as the *sève de la jeunesse* palpitates in youthful limbs and adds a glow and glory to the inconsiderate or unseemly acts of an Alcibiades or Antony. Christianity, by introducing a new conception of the physical relations of humanity, by regarding the body as the temple of the spirit, utterly rejected and repudiated this delirium of the senses, this voluntary acceptance of merely animal conditions. Christianity taught mankind, what the Greeks had never learned, that it is our highest duty to be at discord with the universe upon this point. Man, whose subtle nature might be compared to a many-stringed instrument, is bidden to restrain the resonance of those chords which do not thrill in unison with purely spiritual and celestial harmonies. Hence the theories of celibacy and asceticism, and of the sinfulness of carnal pleasure, which are wholly alien to Greek moral and religious notions. Never since the age of Athenian splendour has a rational and highly civilised nation dared to express by any solemn act its sense of union with merely physical nature. Aristophanes is therefore the poet of a past age, the "hierophant of a now unapprehended mystery," the unique remaining example of an almost unlimited genius set apart and consecrated to a cultus which subsequent civilisation has determined to annihilate. The only age which offers anything like a parallel to the Athenian era of Aristophanes is that of the Italian Renaissance. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at Venice, Florence, and Rome, it seemed as if the Phallic ecstasy might possibly revive, as if the animal nature of man might again be deified, in sentiment at least, and as if the highest arts might stoop once more to interpret and to consecrate the poetry of the senses. But the conscience of the world was changed; and this could no longer be. The image of Christ crowned with thorns had passed across the centuries; hopes undreamed of by the Greeks had aroused a new spirit in

the soul of man, and had forced him in spite of inclination to lift his eyes from earth to heaven. Over the joys of the flesh, which were connected with a future doom of pain unending and disgrace, was shed a hue of gloom and horror. Conception was looked upon as sin : birth as disaster. It was even doubted whether for any but for virgins, except by some special privilege of election, salvation could be hoped. Therefore, while the Greeks had been innocent in their serene unconsciousness of sin or shame, the extravagances of the Renaissance were guilty, turbid, and morbid, because they were committed defiantly, in open reprobacy, in scorn of the acknowledged law. What was at worst bestial in the Greeks has become devilish in the Renaissance. How different from a true Greek is Benvenuto Cellini : how unlike the monsters even of Greek mythic story is Francesco Cenci : how far more awful in his criminality is the Borgia than any despot of Greek colony or island ! I have been somewhat led astray from the point in view, which was to prove that the comedies of Aristophanes embody a peculiar and temporary, though recurring and recognised, phase of Greek feeling—that they owe their license in a great measure to their religious origin, and to the enthusiasm of the Bacchic ecstasy.

The Italian  
Renaissance.

But what has just been said about the difference between Athenian Greece and the Italian Renaissance will show that Aristophanes has a still more solid ground of defence in the fact that he was thoroughly in harmony with the moral sense of his age and nation, and that the Bacchic license was only an exaggeration of more ordinary habits both of thought and action. It must be acknowledged that the Greeks were devoid of what we call shame and delicacy in respect of their bodies. It was only in the extreme old age of the Greek race, and under the dominion of Oriental mysticism, that the Alexandrian Plotinus was heard to exclaim that he blushed because he had a body. The true Greeks, on the contrary, were proud of the body, loved to display their physical perfections, felt no shame

Greek respect for  
the body.

Physical  
beauty.

of any physical needs, were not degraded by the exercise of any animal function, nay poetised the pleasures of the flesh. Simonides, in his lines on happiness, prays first for health and next for beauty; and a thousand passages might be quoted to prove how naturally and sincerely the Greeks reckoned physical beauty among the chief goods of life, and how freely they exhibited it in all its splendour. As a slight indication of the popular feeling, we might quote the reproof for effeminacy which Aristophanes utters against the young men who thought it necessary to appear clothed at the Pan-athenaic festival; from which it is clear that the Greek conscience connected nudity with purity. The immense value attached to physical beauty is evident even from their military history—from the record, for instance, of Callicrates among the heroes of Plataea, simply because he was the fairest of the Greeks who fought that day. Again, Herodotus tells of one Philippus, who joined in the expedition of Dorieus against Eryx, and who being slain and stripped by the people of Segeste, was taken up by his foes and nobly buried, and thereafter worshipped as a hero on account of his exceeding beauty. The influence which the sight of beauty exercised over the gravest of the Greeks is proved by the story of Phryne before the Areopagus, and by what Plato tells of Socrates at the beginning of the *Charmides*. How it could electrify a nation assembled in the theatre, is shown by Plutarch's story of the slave whom Nicias set free for winning the applause of all Athens when acting Dionysus, and by Xenophon's tale about another Dorieus whom the Athenians, though he was their deadly foe, released ransomless and scatheless, after he had been captured and sent to Attica, because he was a very goodly man. Nor was it the sense of beauty only, or the open exhibition of the person, which marked the Greeks. Besides this, and perhaps flowing from it, we find in them an extraordinary callousness with regard to many things which we think shocking and degrading in the last degree. The mere fact that Alcibiades, while a minister of

the Athenian people, could have told the tales of his youth, recorded in Plato's *Banquet*, or that grave men could have contended without reserve for the favour of distinguished courtesans, proves that the Athenian public was ready to accept whatever Aristophanes might set before them—not to take his jokes scornfully, as a Roman patron trifled with the *facetie* of his *Græculus esuriens*, but while enjoying them, to respect their author.

Nor is Aristophanes without another solid ground of defence, on the score of sincerity and healthiness. In his immodesty there is nothing morbid, though it is expressed more crudely than suits the moral dignity of man. Aristophanes is never prurient, never in bad taste or vulgar. He has none of the obscenity which revolts us in Swift, who uses filth in order to degrade and violate our feelings; none of the nastiness of Molière or Pope, whose courtly and polished treatment of disgusting subjects is a disgrace to literature; none of the coarseness of Ben Jonson; none of the far more indecent innuendo which contaminates the writings of humourists like Sterne and satirists like Voltaire, who seem always trying, childishly or apishly, to tamper with forbidden things. Aristophanes accepts licentiousness as a fact which needs no apology: he does not, as the moderns do, mingle it with sentiment, or indulge in it on the sly. He has no *polissonnerie*: the *vice égrillard* of the French (from whom we are obliged to borrow these phrases) is unknown to him. His license is large, serene, sane, statesque, self-approved. His sensuality is nonchalant and natural—so utterly devoid of shame, so thoroughly at home and well contented with itself, that it has no perturbation, no defiance, no mysterious attractiveness. Besides he is ironical: his dissolute young men (the ἀπεψωλημένοι and εὐρύπρωκτοι) promenade in noonday, and get laughed at, instead of being stoned and hooted down. About the audacious scene between Kinesias and Murrhiné, in the *Lysistrata*, there is no Aretine hircosity. It is merely comic—

Healthiness  
and candour  
of Aristophanes.

Comparison  
with Rabelais.

a farcical incident, selected, not for the rankness of its details, but for its dramatic capabilities. The same may be said about the termination of the *Thesmophoriazuse* and the scene in the *Ecclesiazuse*, which so vividly illustrates the working of one law in the new commonwealth. So innocent in his unconsciousness is Aristophanes, that he rarely condescends even to satirise the sensual vices. The lines about Aripkrades in the *Knights*, however, are an instance of his having done this with more than the pungency of Martial, and it must be admitted that his pictures of the drunkenness and incontinence of the Athenian women have something Swiftish in their brutal sarcasm. If we are to seek for an approximation to Aristophanic humour, we shall find it perhaps in Rabelais. Rabelais exhibits a similar disregard for decency, combining the same depth of purpose and largeness of insight with the same coarse fun. But in Aristophanes there is nothing quite grotesque and homely, whereas Rabelais is full of these qualities. Even the opening of the *Peace*, fantastic as it is in absurdity, does not touch the note of grossness peculiar to French Pantagruelism. Aristophanes is always Greek, while Rabelais inherits the mediæval spirit. In reading Aristophanes we seem to have the serene skies of Attica above our heads; the columns of the Propylæa and the Parthenon look down on us; noble shapes of youths and maidens are crowding sacred marble steps; below, upon the mirror of the sea, shine Salamis and Ægina; and far off, in hazy distance, rise Peloponnesian hills. With these pictures of the fancy his comedy harmonises. But Rabelais carries us away to Gothic courts and monkish libraries: we fill his margin with etchings in the style of Gustave Doré. What has been said of Rabelais applies with even greater force to Hogarth, whose absolute sincerity is as great as that of Aristophanes, but who is never light and careless. His coarseness is the product of a coarse nature, of coarse manners, of a period of national coarseness. We tolerate it because of the moral earnestness beneath: the artist.



is striving diligently to teach us by warning us of vice. This is hardly ever the case with Aristophanes. When he is coarse, we pardon him for very different reasons. In his wilful degradation of humanity to the level of animals we recognise a portion of the Weltvernichtungsidee. In the intellectual arrogance of the Athenian prime a poet could afford thus to turn the world upside down. But those who cannot subscribe to the following dictum of Taine, which is very applicable to Aristophanes,—“Elevées à cette énormité et savourées avec cette insouciance, les fonctions corporelles deviennent poétiques,”—those who

“Wink and shut their apprehension up  
From common sense of what men were and are,  
Who would not know what men must be”—

will need to “hurry amain” from the masque of moral anarchy which the great comedian displays. With these remarks I may finally dismiss what has to be said about the chief disability under which Aristophanes labours as a poet.<sup>1</sup>

For the enjoyment of Aristophanic fun a sort of southern childishness and swiftness of gleeful apprehension is required. It does not shine so much in its pure wit as in its overflowing humour and in the inexhaustible fertility of ludicrous devices by which laughter is excited. The ascent of Trugaios to heaven upon the dung-beetle's back, and the hauling of Peace from her well in the *Eirene*, or the wine-skin dressed up like a baby in the *Thesmophoriazuseæ*, may be mentioned as instances of this broad but somewhat peculiar drollery. Burlesquing the gods was always a capital resource of the comic poets. If we in the nineteenth century can find any amusement whatever in Byron's or Burnand's travesties of Olympus, how

Aristo-  
phanic  
burlesque.

<sup>1</sup> Since this chapter was written, Mr. Browning's interesting piece of criticism in verse, *Aristophanes' Apology*, containing a most clever caricature of Aristophanes, and a no less clever defence of Euripides, has appeared. I do not see any reason to alter the view expressed above concerning Greek Comedy.

exquisitely absurd to an Athenian mob must have been the figures of Prometheus under an umbrella, Heracles the glutton, Hermes and Æacus the household slaves, Bacchus the young fop, and Iris the soubrette. The puns of Aristophanes for the most part are very bad, but the parodies are excellent. Then the surprises (*παρὰ προσδοκίαν*), both of language and of incident, with which his comedies abound, the broad and genial caricatures which are so largely traced and carried out in detail with such force, the brilliant descriptions of familiar things seen from odd or unexpected points of view, and lastly the enormous quantity of mirth-producing matter which the poet squanders with the prodigality of conscious omnipotence, all contribute to heighten the comic effect of Aristophanes. Perhaps the most intelligible piece of fun, in the modern sense of the word, is the last scene in the *Thesmophoriazuse*, which owes its effect to parody and caricature more than to allusions which are hard to seize. A great deal of the fun of Aristophanes must have depended upon local and personal peculiarities which we cannot understand: the constant references to the effeminate Cleisthenes, the skin-flint Pauson, miserly Patrocles, cowardly Cleonymus, Execestides the alien, Agyrrhius the upstart, make us yawn because we cannot catch the exact point of the jests against them. Indeed, as Schlegel has said, "we may boldly affirm that, notwithstanding all the explanations which have come down to us—notwithstanding the accumulation of learning which has been spent upon it, one half of the wit of Aristophanes is altogether lost to the moderns."

The fame  
of Aristophanes.

Having dismissed these preliminary considerations, we may now ask what has caused the comedy of Aristophanes to triumph over the obstacles to its acceptance. Why have his plays been transmitted to posterity when those of Eupolis and Cratinus have perished, and when only scattered lines from the eight hundred comedies of the middle period read by Athenæus have survived destruction? No one has asked of

Aristophanes the question which the Alexandrian critic put to Menander: "Oh, Nature and Menander, which of you copied the other?" Yet Menander is scarcely more to us than the memory of a departed greatness, or at best an echo sounding somewhat faintly from the Roman theatre, while Aristophanes survives among the most highly cherished monuments of antiquity. The answer to this question is, no doubt, that Aristophanes was more worth preservation than his predecessors or successors. It is wiser to have confidence in the ultimate good taste and conservative instinct of humanity, than to accept Bacon's half-ironical, half-irritable saying, that the stream of time lets every solid substance sink, and carries down the froth and scum upon its surface. As far, at least, as it is possible to form a judgment, we may be pretty certain that in the province of the highest art and of the deepest thought we possess the greater portion of those works which the ancients themselves prized highly; indeed, we may conjecture that had the great libraries of Alexandria and Byzantium been transmitted to us entire, the pure metal would not very greatly have exceeded in bulk what we now possess, but would have been buried beneath masses of inferior matter from which centuries of criticism would have scarcely sufficed to disengage it. Aristophanes was preserved in his integrity, we need not doubt, because he shone forth as a *poet* transcendent for his splendour even among the most brilliant of Attic playwrights. Cratinus may have equalled or surpassed him in keen satire; Eupolis may have rivalled him in exquisite artistic structure; but Aristophanes must have eclipsed them, not merely by uniting their qualities successfully, but also by the exhibition of some diviner faculty, some higher spiritual afflatus. If we analyse his art, we find that he combines the breadth of humour, which I have already sought to characterise, with the utmost versatility and force of intellect, with the power of grasping his subjects under all their bearings, with extraordinary depth of masculine good sense, with inexhaustible

Preservation of classic masterpieces.

argumentative resources, and with a marvellous hold on personalities. Yet all these qualities, essential to a comic poet who pretended also to be the public censor of politics and morals, would not have sufficed to immortalise him had he not been essentially a poet—a poet in what we are apt to call the modern sense of the word—a poet, that is to say, endowed with original intuitions into nature, and with the faculty of presenting to our minds the most varied thoughts and feelings in language uniformly beautiful, as the creatures of an exuberant and self-swayed fancy. Aristophanes is a poet as Shelley, or Ariosto, or Shakespeare is a poet, far more than as Sophocles, or Pindar, or Lucretius is a poet. In spite of his profound art, we seem to hear him uttering “his native wood notes wild.” The subordination of the fancy to the fixed aims of the reason, which characterises classical poetry, is not at first sight striking in Aristophanes; but he splendidly exhibits the wealth, luxuriance, variety, and subtlety of the fancy working with the reason, and sometimes superseding it, which we recognise in the greatest modern poets. If we seek to define the peculiar qualities of his poetic power, we are led to results not easily expressed, because all general critical conclusions are barren and devoid of force when worded, but which may perhaps be stated and accepted as the text for future illustration.

The poetry  
of Aristophanes.

The poetry of Aristophanes is always swift and splendid. We watch its brilliant course as we might watch the flight of a strong rapid bird, whose plumage glitters by moments in the light of the sun; for, to insist upon the metaphor, the dazzling radiance of his fancy only shines at intervals, capriciously, with fitful flashes, coruscating suddenly and dying out again. It is as if the neck alone and a portion of the feathers of the soaring bird were flecked with gold and crimson grain, so that a turn of the body or a fluttering of the pinions is enough to bring the partial splendour into light or cast it into shadow. Aristophanes passes by abrupt transitions from the coarsest or most simply witty dialogue to passages of pure and plaintive

song; he quits his fiercest satire for refreshing strains of lark-like heaven-aspiring melody. These again he interrupts with sudden ruthlessness, breaking the melody in the middle of a bar, and dropping the unfinished stanza. He seems shy of giving his poetic impulse free rein, and prefers to tantalise<sup>1</sup> us with imperfect specimens of what he might achieve; so that his splendour is like that of northern streamers in its lambency, though swift and piercing as forked lightnings in its intensity. Even his most impassioned and sustained flights of imagination are broken by digressions into satire, fantastic merriment, or parody, by which the more dull-witted Athenians must have been sorely puzzled in their inability to decide on the serious or playful purpose of the poet. Perhaps the most splendid passages of true poetry in Aristophanes are the Choruses of the initiated in the *Frogs*, the Chorus of the Clouds before they appear upon the stage, the invitation to the nightingale, and the parabasis of the Birds, the speech of Dikaios Logos in the *Clouds*, some of the praises of rustic life in the *Peace*, the serenade (notwithstanding its coarse satire) in the *Ecclesiazusæ*, and the songs of Spartan and Athenian maidens in the *Lysistrata*. The charm of these marvellous lyrical episodes consists of their perfect simplicity and freedom. They seem to be poured forth as "profuse strains of unpremeditated art" from the fulness of the poet's soul. Their language is elastic, changeful, finely-tempered, fitting the delicate thought like a veil of woven air. It has no Pindaric involution, no Æschylean pompousness, no studied Sophoclean subtlety, no Euripidean conceits. It is always bright and Attic, sparkling like the many-twinkling laughter of the breezy sea, or like the light of morning upon rain-washed olive-branches. But this poetry is never very deep or passionate. It cannot stir us with the intensity of Sappho,

High flights  
of purest  
lyric sing-  
ing.

<sup>1</sup> As a minor instance of these sudden transitions from the touching to the absurd, take Charon's speech (*Frogs*, 185):—

τίς εἰς ἀναπαύλας ἐκ κακῶν καὶ πραγμάτων;  
τίς εἰς τὸ Λήθης πρῶτον, ἢ 'ς οὐνοῦ πόδας,  
ἢ 'ς Κερβερίου, ἢ 'ς κόρακας, ἢ 'πὶ Ταίναρον;

with the fire and madness of the highest inspiration. Indeed, the conditions of comedy precluded Aristophanes, even had he desired it (which we have no reason to suspect) from attempting the more august movements of lyric poetry. The peculiar glories of his style are its untutored beauties, the improvised perfection and unerring exactitude of natural expression, for which it is unparalleled by that of any other Greek poet. In her most delightful moments the muse of Aristophanes suggests an almost plaintive pathos, as if behind the comic mask there were a thinking, feeling human soul, as if the very uproar of the Bacchic merriment implied some afterthought of sadness.

Passages  
from the  
*Birds* and  
the *Peace*.

A detailed examination of the structure of the comedies would be the best illustration of these remarks. At present it will be enough to bring forward two examples of the tender melodies which may at times be overheard in pauses of the wild Aristophanic symphony. The first of these is the well-known *Welcome to the Nightingale*, sung by the Chorus before their *Parabasis*:<sup>1</sup>—

ὦ φίλη, ὦ ξουθή, ὦ  
φίλτατον ὀρνέων,  
πάντων ξύννομε τῶν ἐμῶν  
ὑμνων ξύντροφ' ἀηδοῖ,  
ἦλθες, ἦλθες, ὦφθης,  
ἦδὺν φθόγγον ἐμοὶ φέρουσ'.  
ἀλλ' ὦ καλλιβόαν κρέκουσ'  
αὐλὸν φθέγμασιν ἡρινοῖς,  
ἄρχου τῶν ἀναπαίστων.

With what a fluent caressing fulness one word succeeds another here! How each expresses love and joy! Remember, too, that all the birds are singing together, and that the wild throat

<sup>1</sup> No translation will give any sense of the Greek. But this version is tolerably literal: "O dear one, O tawny, O dearest of birds! Singer in tune with all my songs, nurtured with me, thou nightingale! Thou art here, thou art here, on our eyes thou hast shone, bringing a sweet voice to me! Come, thou who settest the fair-tuned flute to the warblings of spring; come, let the anapaest measure begin!"

of their playfellow, the nightingale, is ready to return the welcome with its throbbing song of Maytime and young summer. Take another poetic touch, brief and unobtrusive, yet painting a perfect picture with few strokes, and transfusing it with the spirit of the scene imagined :<sup>1</sup>—

ἀλλ' ἀναμνησθέντες, ὦνδρες,  
 τῆς διαίτης τῆς παλαιᾶς,  
 ἣν παρείχ' αὐτὴ ποθ' ἡμῖν,  
 τῶν τε παλασίων ἐκείνων,  
 τῶν τε σύκων, τῶν τε μύρτων,  
 τῆς τρυγός τε τῆς γλυκείας,  
 τῆς ἰωνίᾶς τε τῆς πρὸς τῷ φρέατι,  
 τῶν τε ἐλαῶν, ὧν ποθοῦμεν—

"The violet-bed beside the well, and the olive-trees we long to see again." Trugaios is reminding his fellow-villagers of the pleasures of peace and of their country life. Those who from their recollection of southern scenery can summon up the picture, who know how cool and shady are those wells, mirroring maiden-hair in their black depth—how fragrant and dewy are the beds of tangled violets—how dreamy are the olive-trees, ærial, mistlike, robed with light, will understand the peculiar longing of these lines.

But we must not dwell too much upon the glimpses of pathetic poetry in Aristophanes, which after all are but few and far between, mere swallow-flights of song, when compared with the serious business of his art. It is well known that the old comedy of the Athenians performed the function of a public censorship. Starting from the primitive comic song, in which a rude Fescennine license of what we now call "chaffing" was allowed, and tempering its rustic jocularity with the caustic bitterness of Archilochian satire, comedy became an instrument for holding up to public ridicule all things of general interest.

The satiric basis of this comedy.

<sup>1</sup> "Nay, comrades, bethink ye of the former happy life of which she once was giver to us all: those cakes of fruit, those figs, those myrtle-berries, the honeyed must of the new wine, the violet-bed beside the well, the olive-trees we long to see once more."

Conserva-  
tive prin-  
ciples of the  
poet

Persons and institutions, nay, the gods themselves, are freely laughed at. Bacchus seems to have enjoyed the jokes even when directed against himself: *καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἴσως χαίρει φιλόγελως τις ὧν* are the words of Lucian.<sup>1</sup> So no one else had a right to resent the poet's merriment, when the presiding god of the festival approved of sarcasms against his deity, and trod his own stage as a cowardly effeminate young profligate. This being the more serious aim of comedy, it followed that Aristophanes always had some satiric, and in so far didactic purpose, underlying his extravagant caricatures. What that purpose was, is too well known to need more than passing mention. From his earliest appearance under the name of Callistratus, to the last of his victories, Aristophanes maintained his character as an Athenian conservative. He came forward uniformly as a panegyrist of the old policy of Athens, and a vehement antagonist of the new direction taken by his nation subsequently to the Persian war. This one theme he varied, according to circumstances and convenience. In the first of his plays, the *Daitaleis*, he attacked the profligacy and immodesty of the rising generation, who neglected their Homer for the lessons of the sophists, and engaged in legal quarrels. The *Acharnians*, the *Peace*, and the *Lysistrata* are devoted to impressing on the Athenians the advantages of peace, and inducing them to lay aside their enmity against Sparta. In the *Knights*, the demagogues are attacked through the person of Cleon, with a violence of concentrated passion that surpasses the most savage onslaughts of Archilochus. The *Clouds* and *Wasps* exhibit different pictures of the insane passion for litigation and the dishonest arts of rhetoric which prevailed at Athens, fostered partly by the influence of sophists who professed to teach a profitable method of public speaking, and partly by the flattery of the demagogues. The *Birds* is a fantastic satire upon the Athenian habit of building castles in

<sup>1</sup> "And the god too peradventure takes pleasure in them, since he is a laughter-loving fellow."



the air, and indulging in extravagant dreams of conquest. In the *Ecclesiazusæ* Aristophanes seems bent on ridiculing the visionary utopias of political theorists like Plato, and also on caricaturing the social license which prevailed in Athens, where everything, as he complains, had been tried, except for women to appear in public like their masters. In the *Thesmophoriazusæ* and the *Frogs* we exchange politics for literature; but in his treatment of the latter subject, Aristophanes exhibits the same conservative spirit. His hostility against Euripides, which is almost as bitter as his hatred of Cleon, is founded upon the sophistical nature of his art. Indeed, the demagogues, the sophists, and Euripides were looked upon by him as three forms of the same poison which was corrupting the moral character of his nation. We have now indicated the serious intention of all the plays of Aristophanes, except the *Plutus*, which is an ethical allegory conceived under a different inspiration from that which gave the impulse to his other creative acts. Yet it must not be forgotten that the subject-matter of these plays is often varied: in the *Acharnians*, for example, we have a specimen of literary criticism, while the *Lysistrata* is aimed as much at the follies of women as intended to set forth the advantages of peace. We must also remember that it was the poet's purpose to keep his serious ground-plan concealed. His Comedy had to be the direct antithesis to Greek Tragedy. If it taught, it was to teach by paradox. In this respect, Aristophanes realised a very high ideal. Preach as he may be doing in reality, and underneath his merriment, there is hardly a passage in all his plays, if we except the pleadings of Dikaïos Logos in the *Clouds*, and the personal portions of the *Parabases*, in which we catch him revealing his own earnestness. Every ordinary point of view is so consistently ignored, and all the common relations of things are so thoroughly reversed, that the topsy-turvy chaos which a play of Aristophanes presents, is quite harmonious. It is, in fact, madness methodised and with a sober meaning. Perhaps we

Literary  
criticism.

Teaching  
velled in  
paradox.

Satire on  
Socrates and  
Agathon.

ought to seek in this consideration the key to those problems which have occupied historians when dealing with the Aristophanic criticism of Socrates. How, it is always asked, could Aristophanes have been so consciously unjust to the great moralist of Athens? If we keep in sight the intentional absurdity of everything in one of the Aristophanic comedies, we may perhaps understand how it was possible for the poet to travesty the friend with whom he conversed familiarly at supper parties. That Plato understood the ridicule of his great master from some such point of view as this, is clear from his express recommendation of the *Clouds* to Dionysius, from the portrait which he draws from Aristophanes in the *Symposium*, and from the eulogistic epigram (if that is genuine) which he composed upon him. It is curious as a parallel, that Agathon should have been even more ignobly caricatured than Socrates at the beginning of the *Thesmophoriazusaë*; yet we know from his own lips, as well as from the dialogue of Plato, that Aristophanes was a friend of the tragic poet, for he elsewhere calls him

ἀγαθὸς ποιητὴς καὶ ποθεινὸς τοῖς φίλοις.

“A good poet and longed for by his friends.”

The lash applied to Socrates and Agathon is scarcely less stinging than that applied to Cleon and Euripides. Yet the fact remains, that Aristophanes was the friend of Agathon, and a member of the Socratic circle. Much of the obscurity attending the interpretation of the *Clouds* arises from our having lost the finer *nuances* of Athenian feeling respecting the persons satirised in the old comedy. *We* do not, for example, understand Cratinus when he joins the name of Euripides with that of his great satirist in one epithet descriptive of the quibbling style of the day—*εὐριπιδαριστοφανίζειν* (to Euripido-Aristophanise).<sup>1</sup> But to return

<sup>1</sup> This epithet contains the gist of the objection often brought against Aristophanes, that he assisted the demoralisation which he denounced.

from this digression, we may observe that it was only in a democracy that an institution unsparing of friend and foe, like the old comedy, in which persons were openly exposed to censure and the solemn acts of the government were called in question, could be tolerated. Accordingly we find that the early development of comedy, after the date of Susarion, was checked by the accession of Pisistratus to power, and that the old comedy itself perished with the extinction of Athenian liberty. It is only a democracy that likes to criticise itself, that takes pride in its indifference to ridicule, and in its readiness to acknowledge its own errors. In this respect, we English are very democratic. We abuse ourselves and expose our own follies more than any other nation; the press and the platform do for us in a barren, unæsthetic fashion, what Aristophanes did for the Athenian public.

Democratic  
freedom of  
critique.

Perhaps we may now be able to see that a middle course must be followed between the extremes of regarding Aristophanes as an indecent parasite pandering to the worst inclinations of the Athenian rabble, and of looking upon him as a profound philosopher and sober patriot. The former view is maintained by Grote, who, though he is somewhat hampered by his pronounced championship of all the democratic institutions of Athens, among which the comedy of Aristophanes must needs be reckoned, yet clearly thinks that the poet was a meddling monkey, full indeed of genius, but injurious to the order of the state, and to the peace of private persons. The latter has been advocated by the German scholars, Ranke, Bergk, and Meineke, against whom Grote has directed an able and conclusive argument in the notes to his eighth volume. Truly, it is absurd to pretend that Aristophanes was the prudent and far-seeing moralist described by his German admirers. To imagine him thus, would be to falsify the whole purpose

Aristo-  
phanes was  
neither  
buffoon nor  
preacher.

If he did so, it was not by his grossness and indelicacy, but by his subtilty and refinement and audacity of universal criticism. The sceptical *aquafortis* of his age is as strong in Aristophanes as in Euripides.

of the Athenian Comic Drama, and to test its large extravagance by the narrow standard of modern morality. We might as well fancy that Alexander was an unselfish worker in the service of humanity, as bring ourselves to see in Aristophanes the sage of uniformly staid sobriety. Not to mention that such a notion is at total variance with the only authentic portrait we possess of him, in the *Symposium* of Plato, every line of his comedies cries out against so pedantic and priggish a calumny. For it is a calumny thus to misrepresent the high-spirited muse of Aristophanes, with her dishevelled hair and Coan robe of flimsiest gauze, and wild eyes swimming in the mists of wine. She never pretends to be better than a priestess of the midnight Bacchus and Corinthian Aphrodite, though she believes sincerely in the inspiration of these deities. To see in her a Vestal or a Diotima, to set the owl of Pallas on her shoulder, and to strap the ægis round her panting breasts is a piece of elaborate stupidity and painful impertinence, which it remained for German pedagogues to perpetrate. Yet it is equally wrong to think of Aristophanes merely as a pernicious calumniator, who killed Socrates, and put an ineffectual spoke in the wheel of progress. Granted that he was more of a merry-andrew than a moralist (more of a *γελωτοποιὸς* than a *μετεωρολόεσχος*), we must surely be blind if we fail to recognise the deep undernote of good sense and wisdom which gives eternal value to his jests—worse than blind if we do not honour him for valiant and unflinching service in the cause which he had recognised as right. Nor are the enemies of Aristophanes less insensible to his real merits as an artist, than his ponderous German friends. What are we to think of the imaginative faculties of a man, who after gazing upon the divine splendours of the genius of Aristophanes, after tracking the erratic flight of this most radiant poet, “with his singing robes about him,” can descend to earth and wish that he had never existed, or shake his head and measure him by the moral standards of Quarterly

Unintelligent criticism.

Reviews and British respectability? Alas, that from the modern world should have evanesced all appreciation of art that is not obviously useful, palpably didactic! If we would rightly estimate Aristophanic comedy, we must be prepared to accept it in the classical spirit, and separating ourselves from either sect of the Pharisees, refuse to picture its great poets to ourselves, on the one hand as patriots *eximii morum gravitate*, or on the other, as foul slanderers and irreverent buffoons. Far beyond and outside the plane of either standing-ground are they. The old comedy of Athens is a work of art so tempered and so balanced, that he who would appreciate it must submit, for a moment at least, to forego his modern advantages of improved morality, and public decency, and purer taste, and parliamentary courtesy, and to become—if he can bend his moral back to that obliquity—a “merry Greek.”

Real artistic  
quality of  
Aristo-  
phanic  
comedy.

It is now clear that Aristophanic comedy is in the history of art unique—the product of peculiar and unrepeatable circumstances. The essential differences between it and modern comedy are manifold. Modern comedy partakes of the tragic spirit; it has a serious purpose, acknowledged by the poet; a lesson is generally taught in its catastrophe; it is fond of poetical justice. Aristophanic comedy, as we have seen, whatever may be its purpose, is always ludicrous to the spectators and to itself. *Tartuffe*, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, and *Volpone*, are tragedies without bloodshed: you only laugh at them incidentally. The *Clouds*, the *Knights*, and the *Frogs* excite inevitable laughter. Nor is this difference manifest only in the matter and spirit of the two comedies: it expresses itself externally in their several forms. The plays of Aristophanes, upon the stage, must have been like our pantomimes, or rather, like our operas. If we wish to form a tolerable notion of the appearance of an Aristophanic comedy, we cannot do better than keep in mind the *Flauto Magico* of Mozart. Had Mozart received a good translation

Greek and  
modern  
comic art.

Aristo-  
phanes and  
the opera of  
Mozart.

of the *Birds* instead of the wretched libretto of the *Zauberflöte*, what a really magic drama he might have produced! Even as it is, with the miserable materials he had to work upon, the master musician has given us an Aristophanic specimen of the ludicrous passing by abrupt but delicate transitions to the serious, of parody and irony playing in and out at hide and seek, of pathos lurking beneath merriment, and of madness leaping by a bound into the regions of pure reason. And this he has achieved by the all-subduing witchery of music—by melodies which solve the stiffest contradictions, by the ebb and flow of measured sound rocking upon its surface the most varied thoughts and feelings of the soul of man. In the *Zauberflöte* we are never surprised by any change, however sudden—by any incident, however whimsical. After first lamenting over the stupidity of the libretto, and then resigning ourselves to the caprices of the fairy story, we are delighted to follow the wanderings of music through her labyrinth of quaint and contradictory absurdities. Just so, we fancy, must have been the case with Aristophanes. Peisthetærus and Euelpides were not more discordant than Papageno; the *Birds* had their language as *Astrifammante* has hers; nor were the deeper tones of Aristophanic meaning more out of place than the bass notes of Sarastro, and the choruses of his attendant priests. Music, which has harmonised the small and trivial contradictions of the *Zauberflöte*, harmonised the vast and profound contradictions of Aristophanic comedy. It was the melodramatic setting of such plays as the *Birds* and the *Clouds* which caused their *Weltvernichtungsideo* to blossom forth melodiously into the magic tree, with all its blossoms and nightingales and merry apes, to which I have so often referred.

With this parallel between the *Birds* and an opera like the *Zauberflöte* in our minds, we may place ourselves among the thirty thousand Athenian spectators assembled in the theatre about the end of March, 414 B.C. We must remember that

the great expedition had recently gone forth to Sicily. It was only in the preceding year that the Salaminian galley had been sent for Alcibiades, who escaped to Sparta, where he was now engaged in stirring up evil for his countrymen. But as yet no disaster had befallen the army of invasion. Gylippus had not arrived. Lamachus was still alive. Every vessel brought news to the Athenians of the speed with which their forces were carrying on the work of circumvallation, and of the despondency of the Syracusans. The spectators of the plays of Aristophanes and Ameipsias were nearly the same persons who had listened to the honeyed eloquence of Alcibiades persuading them to undertake the expedition, and promising them not merely the supremacy of Hellas, but also the empire of the Mediterranean and the subjugation of Carthage. Alcibiades, indeed, had turned a traitor to his country; but the charm of his oratory and the spirit he had roused remained. Each father in the audience might fairly hope that his son would share in raising Athens to her height of splendour: not a man but felt puffed up with insolent prosperity. The only warning voice which spoke while Athens trembled on the very razor-edge of fortune, was that of Aristophanes—but with how sweet and delicate a satire, with sarcasms that had the sound of flattery, with prognostications of failure that wore the shape of realised ambitions, with musical banter and multitudinous jests that seemed to apologise for folly rather than to censure it! There is no doubt but that Aristophanes intended in the *Birds* to ridicule the ambition of the Athenians and their inveterate gullibility. Peisthetærus and Euelpides represent in comic caricature the projectors, agitators, schemers, flatterers, who, led by Alcibiades, had imposed upon the excitable vanity of the nation. Cloudeuckootown is any castle in the air or South Sea Bubble, which might take the fancy of the Athenian mob. But it is also more especially the project of Western dominion connected with their scheme of

Political circumstances of Athens, when the *Birds* appeared.

Satire of  
the *Birds*.

Sicilian conquest. Aristophanes has treated his theme so poetically and largely, that the interests of the *Birds* is not, like that of the *Wasps* or the *Knights*, almost wholly confined to the Athens of his day. It transcends those limitations of place and time, and is the everlasting allegory of foolish schemes and flimsy ambition. A modern dramatist—Ben Jonson or Molière for instance, perhaps even Shakespeare—could hardly have refrained from ending the allegory with some piece of poetical justice. We should have seen Peisthetærus disgraced and Cloudecockootown resolved into “such stuff as dreams are made of.” But this is not the art of Aristophanes. He brings Peisthetærus to a successful catastrophe, and ends his comedy with marriage songs of triumph. Yet none the less pointed is the satire. The unreality of the vision is carefully maintained, and Peisthetærus walking home with Basileia for his bride, like some new sun-eclipsing star, seems to wink and strut and shrug his shoulders, conscious of the Titanic sham.

Poetisation  
of bird-life.

To analyse in detail a work of art so well known to all students as the *Birds* would be needless. It is enough to notice in passing that it is quite unique of its kind, combining as it does such airy fancies as we find in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* with the peculiar pungency of Aristophanic satire, untainted by the obscenity which forms an integral part of the *Ecclesiazusæ* or *Lysistrata*. Most exquisite is the art with which Aristophanes has collected all the facts of ornithology, all the legends and folk-lore connected with birds, so as to create a fanciful birdland and atmosphere of true bird life for his imaginary beings. Not less wonderful is the imagination with which he has conceived the whole universe from the bird's point of view, his sympathy with the nightingale, the drollery of his running footman Trochilus, the pompous gravity of his King Epops, and so on through the whole of his winged *dramatis personæ*. The triumph of his art is the Parabasis, in which the birds pour forth



melodious compassion for the transitory earth-born creatures of an hour. Poor men, with their little groping lives! The epithets of pity which the happier birds invent to describe man, are woven as it were of gossamer and dew, symbols of fragility. Then the music changes as the vision of winged Erôs, upsoaring from the primeval wind-egg, bursts upon the fancy of the chorus. Again it subsides into still more delicate irony, when the just reign of the birds on earth and over heaven is prophesied; and the whole concludes with semi-chorus answering to semi-chorus in antiphonal strains of woodland poetry and satire—the sweet notes of the flute responded to by shouts of Bacchic laughter.

We have seen in dealing with the *Birds* how Aristophanes converted the whole world into a transcendental birdland, and filled his play with airy shapes and frail imaginings. This power of alchemising and transmuting everything he touches into the substance of his thought of the moment, is no less remarkable in the comedy of the *Clouds*. And here we are able to mark the peculiar nature of his allegory more clearly than in the choruses of the *Birds*, with greater accuracy to distinguish the play of pure poetry alternating with satire, to trace the glittering thread of fancy drawn athwart the more fantastic arabesque of comic caricature. In the *Clouds* Aristophanes ridicules the rising school of teachers who professed to train the youth of Athens in the arts of public speaking and successful litigation. He aims at the tribe of sophists, who substituted logical discussion for the old æsthetic education of the Greeks, and who sought to replace mythological religion by meteorological explanations of natural phenomena. The pedantry of this dialectic in its boyhood offended the artistic sense of a conservative like Aristophanes: the priggishness of upstart science had the air to him of insolent irreligion. Besides, he saw that this new philosophy, while it undermined the moral temper of his nation, was capable of lending itself to ignoble ends—that

Allegory of  
the *Clouds*.

Satire on the  
sophists.

Cloud-  
myths of  
old Hellas.

its possessors sought to make money, that their disciples were eager to acquire mere technical proficiency, in order to cut a fine figure in public and to gain their selfish purposes. The sophists professed two chief subjects, τὰ μετέωρα, or the science of natural phenomena; and rhetoric, or the art of conquering by argument. Aristophanes, in the *Clouds*, satirises both under the form of allegory by bringing upon the stage his chorus of Clouds, who, in their changeful shapes—heaven-obscuring, appearing variously to various eyes, coming into being from the nothing of the air, and passing away again by imperceptible dissolution, usurping upon the functions of Zeus in the thunder and the rain, hurrying hither and thither at the will of no divine force, but impelled by the newly discovered abstraction Vortex—are the very forms and symbols of the airy, misty Proteus of verbal falseness and intangible irreligion which had begun to possess the Athenians. In order to understand the force of this allegory, we must remember the part which the clouds played in the still vital mythology of the Greeks. It was by a cloud that Hera in her divine scorn had deluded the impious desires of Ixion, who, embracing hollow shapes of vapour, begat Centaurs. The rebellious giants who sought to climb Olympus, were forms of mist and tempest invading the serenity of highest heaven: this Strepsiades indicates when he quotes the words πλοκάμους θ' ἑκατογκεφάλῃ Τυφῶ (the locks of hundred-headed Typhos) as referring to the clouds. It was in cloudy vision that gods appeared to mortals, or escaped their sight; in cloud that the Homeric heroes were snatched from death by their Olympian patrons; in clouds that Æolus dwelt and Danaë was prisoned. The Harpies were wind-tossed films of frothy cloud; the Sirens daughters of foam and mist. Everything that deceived and concealed, that shifted and eluded, that stole away “the enchanted gazer's mind,” all Maya or delusion, all fascination and unrealisable desire, was symbolised by clouds. Nor was

it without meaning that the clouds ascended from ocean, from the wily parent of wave and storm, the inscrutable hoarder of secrets locked within the caverns of the murmuring deep, who might never be taken in any one clear form, who loved to cozen and betray, whose anger was swift and fretful against such as caught him in their toils. The clouds were his daughters, and so was Aphrodite—beautiful, deceitful, soul-subduing—these his offspring of the air, this his child of the foam—these pouring glamour on the eyes of men, this folding their hearts in snares. Without being fanciful, we might follow this analysis through a hundred labyrinths, all tending to show how exquisite to the apprehension of a Greek steeped in mythological associations must have been the allegory of the clouds. We might, moreover, have pointed out the care of Aristophanes to maintain this mythological propriety. Even in the *Parabasia*, for instance, where the Chorus comes forward in its human character as the representative of the poet, there occurs a semi-choric strain of great beauty, hymning the elemental deities of Sun, Air, Ocean, and all-covering Heaven, who are the parents and especial patrons of the clouds; for the Sun begets them from the fountains of the Sea, the Air receives and gives them shape as they drift through her yielding realm, and the great Zeus of the sky compels them to his service, stores them with his thunder, and makes a palace for them in his adamant home, and wreathes their dances round his footstool of the firmament. But it is enough to have pointed out the main features of the allegory. The scope which it afforded for the display of splendid poetry was of course immense. From the first moment of the appearance of the Chorus to the end we never lose sight of their cloudy splendour, and, as in the case of the *Birds*, every thought, playful or imaginative, which can be conceived relating to the world of clouds, is pressed by Aristophanes into his service.

The Chorus  
in the  
*Clouds*.

Invocation  
of the  
Clouds by  
Socrates.

Early in the play the fount of poetry which they suggest, springs pure and clear from the flinty rock of previous satire, Socrates, who has just been displayed to us as the insignificant anatomiser of fleas and gnats, rises suddenly to this height in his invocation :—

“O Sovereign King, immeasurable Air, who keepest the earth balanced, and blazing Ether, and sublime goddesses, ye Clouds of lightning and of thunder, arise, appear, dread queens, in mid-air to your Thinker !”

It is only in the last word, notice, that the comic smile breaks out.

“Come, then, ye reverend Clouds, honour this neophyte with your dread beauty ! whether upon Olympus’ holy snow-swept peaks ye sit, or in the gardens of father Ocean weave the dance with nymphs, or in golden pitchers draw the waters of Nile, or in Mæotis bide, or on the white eyries of Mimas : listen, receive our sacrifice, be gracious to our rites.”

With what radiance of imagination the haunts of the clouds are here enumerated. Sometimes we see them floating in virginal processions above unfooted snows, sometimes enthroned like queens in solemn silence on ærial watch-towers, sometimes dissolved in dew far down among the Oceanides, or brooding, filmy vapours, on the face of broad untroubled lakes.

Aristophanes, it may be said in passing, never dwells upon the more tempestuous functions of the clouds as stormy and angry powers : that would be to violate his allegory, which must always show them deceitfully beautiful, spreading illusion over earth and sky.

In answer to the invitation of Socrates, the Clouds are heard behind the stage chanting a choric hymn ;<sup>1</sup> and here

<sup>1</sup> *ἀέται Νεφέλαι,  
ἀρθῶμεν φανεραὶ δροσερὰν φύσιν εὐάγητον,  
πατὴρ δὲ π’ Ὀκεανοῦ βαρυαχέος  
ὕψηλῶν ὀρέων κορυφὰς ἐπὶ*

it must be remarked that the poet has revealed subtle instinct, for before exhibiting his Chorus, arrayed in veils of filmy gauze, to the people, by which he might have risked the possibility of exciting ludicrous instead of solemn ideas, he enlists the imagination of the audience by a sublime strain of preparatory music, vocally realising the splendour of the coming Clouds before they strike the eyes of the spectators. The rising of  
the Clouds.

It is to the repeated roll of distant thunder that they sing their untranslatable entrance hymn. Behold them rising, silent domes and pinnacles and towers, from the burnished mirror of the noonday sea: how the sunlight flashes on their pearly slopes and fills their deeply-cloven valleys: how dewy bright and glistening they are. Then watch them scale the vault of heaven, quitting the horizon with its mists, marching in tranquil state across the spaces of blue ether, gliding to their thrones among the mountain pines. There they repose, and at their feet is heard the clamour of the streams, the deep rebounding boom of sea-waves; but they are seated in serenity, and below them lies the campaign with its fruits of holy earth, and on their broad immortal marble fronts the unwearied light of the sun-god plays. From their girdles to their sandals falls the robe of mist that wrapped them round, and on the watch-towers of the world they sit, bare in their beauty, godlike forms.

Such is the vision which this inimitable Chorus evokes. Its truth has been felt by all who have seen the rising of

δενδροκόμους, ἵνα  
τηλεφανεῖς σκοπιάς ἀφορώμεθα,  
καρπούς τ' ἀρδομέναν ἱερὰν χθόνα,  
καὶ ποταμῶν ῥαθέων κελαδήματα,  
καὶ πόντον κελάδοντα βαρύβρομον·  
ὄμμα γὰρ αἰθέρος ἀκάματον σελαγεῖται  
μαρμαρέαις ἐν αὔραις.  
ἀλλ' ἀποσεισάμεναι νέφος ὄμβριον  
ἀθανάτας ἰδέας ἐπιδώμεθα  
τηλεσκόπῳ ὄμματι γαῖαν.

*Clouds*, 275.

Poetisation  
of cloud-  
land.

summer clouds from the waters of the Mediterranean. Indeed, this Chorus belongs to the highest order of poetry. Not only does it furnish an example of the freshness which is peculiar to Aristophanes, but it is in the deepest sense an intuition into the inmost life of nature. We hear in it the voice of a true seer or interpreter, who knows by choice of words and rhythms how to convey his own impressions to our mind. Even Shelley, when he wrote his *Cloud*, had grasped perhaps the secret of the pomp and splendour of cloudland less firmly than Aristophanes has done, though his images are piled so multitudinously, and every thought or fancy that a cloud suggests is whirled, as it were, in the drift of brilliant and radiant shapes. Aristophanes has this advantage—that something of the mythopœic power still survived in Greece, and that he shared the sculptural genius of his race. Moreover, his audience were prepared by their religious associations to conceive of his Clouds as living creatures, and he was writing for the stage, where the poetry of personification is made easy by direct appeal to the eyesight.

The Just  
and Unjust  
Logoi.

In the *Clouds* as it has been transmitted to us, Aristophanes employs another and more direct form of allegory. He brings upon the stage the *δίκαιος λόγος* (Right Reason) in controversy with the *ἄδικος λόγος* (False Reason)—the former representing the old conservative education of Athens, the other the new theories and modes of life which were beginning to spring up. It has been conjectured that *δίκαιος λόγος* wore the mask of Aristophanes himself, and *ἄδικος λόγος* that of Thrasymachus the Sophist. If this conjecture hits the truth, it is curious that the vulgar logician whom Socrates handles so severely in Plato's *Republic*, should have been chosen as the ideal of his doctrine and influence—the special pleader of the Phrontisterion. The contest between these two impersonations of modesty and impudence, of manliness and effeminacy, offers an unique example in Greek comic literature of what was common on our own stage about three

centuries ago. The Just and Unjust Logoi dispute and wrangle for the favour of Pheidippides precisely like the abstractions in *Hycke Scornor* or *Lusty Juventus*. Of course this kind of allegory is much coarser and affords less scope for poetical treatment than the exquisite mythus of the *Clouds*. The Logoi are but masks or hollow automata, from behind which the poet utters his arguments: there is no illusion of the senses, no enchantment of the fancy in their presentation. Yet the speech of Dikaïos Logos forms one of the purest and most beautiful passages that Aristophanes has written, in its simple and affectionate picture of old Athenian life. The poet, we fear, was very far behind his age: he looked back to the good times when the sailor only knew enough to sing out "Ahoy!" and call for biscuit: he wanted the Athenian lads to have broad backs and sluggish tongues: he was dead to the advantages of dialectic and Socratic definition: he kept trying to bring back the days of Marathon, when nothing could avert the coming days of Syracuse and Ægospotami and Chæronea. We who read the history of Athens by the light of our Grote, we who are rolling our waves towards the rising instead of the setting sun, know now how very perverse and unadvanced the poet was. Yet, for all that, can we fail to be charmed with the picture that he draws of Greek boyhood in the good old times, and to contrast it favourably with the acknowledged impudence and profligacy of Critias and Agathon and Alcibiades—the friends and pupils of Socrates? "In that blissful time," says Dikaïos Logos, "when I flourished, and modesty and temperance were practised, a boy's voice was never heard; but he would set off at daybreak, in snow or sunshine, with his comrades to the school of the harper, where he learned the ballads of our forefathers in praise of Pallas; and from the harper he would run to the training-ground and exercise himself with the decorum befitting virtuous youth." The rules for the behaviour of boys which Aristo-

Sunny picture of old Greek social life.

Ideal of  
Greek adol-  
escence.

phanes here enunciates, provoke a modern smile; for the morality of Athens obliged lads to observe the same sort of propriety which we expect from girls. But for all his modesty, the youth of those days was not a milksop. He did indeed shun the public baths and the agora, repel the advances of profligate persons, respect his parents, avoid hetairai, and form in his breast an image of Modesty: yet he frequented the wrestling-ground, and grew fair in form and colour with generous exercises, not "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," nor bent and jaded by the restless wrangling of the law courts: but among the sacred olive-trees of the Academy he ran races with his comrade, "crowned with white reeds, smelling of bindweed and careless hours and leaf-shedding poplar, rejoicing in the prime of spring, when the plane-tree whispers to the elm." In these last lines we touch the very core of Greek aristocratic conservatism—that imperious demand for leisure, for *σχολή τῶν ἀναγκαίων* (freedom from care about daily necessities), of which Aristotle speaks as an essential in the life of free men; that contempt of all serious time-consuming business which we find in Plato; that respect for the beauty of the body, and that dislike of every occupation tending to degrade its form or spoil the freshness of its colour; that sympathy with nature in her graceful moods; that well-bred nonchalance; that love of the gymnasium with its poplar sacred to Herakles, the god of endurance, and its plane-tree of swift Hermes—in a word, those accumulated æsthetical prejudices which marked the race pre-eminent for its artistic faculty, the caste of rich and idle citizens supported by a nation of slaves, the unique and never again to be imitated people, who once and for all upon this earth of ours attained perfection, realised the ideal toward which we vainly strive.

With the last lines of this speech in our memory, we may turn to the Dialogues of Plato, whose Phædrus and Charmides and Lysis are true children and disciples of Dikaïos Logos;



or to the Autolycus of Xenophon's *Symposium*, whose breast is as smooth, and skin as bright, and shoulders as broad, and tongue as short, as even Aristophanes could wish; or we may set before us some statue like the Apoxyomenos of Lysippus, or the Discobolos of Myron, and feel that we have gathered, in fancy at least, the flower of the perfection of the pride of Hellas.

Parallels in  
Greek litera-  
ture and  
sculpture.

Much of the allegory of Aristophanes consists of metaphors taken literally and expressed by appropriate symbolism to the audience. Thus, Trugaïos actually drags the goddess Peace, with her attendants Opora and Theoria, from the well, the Chorus, while they help him, singing "Yoho!" like sailors at a capstan. In the same comedy, War and Havoc are exhibited with a gigantic mortar, in which they bray the States of Greece. Socrates suspended in his basket is a metaphorical allegory of this sort, his posture being peculiarly expressive of star-gazing and abstract speculation at a time when the objects of such contemplations were called τὰ μετέωρα (things high in air). Of the same kind is the balance in which the lines of Æschylus and Euripides are weighed. Any poet might use the metaphor (weighed in the balance and found wanting); but it is a stretch of metaphorical license to exhibit an actual pair of scales upon the stage. Many of the figurative actions of the Hebrew prophets were practical appeals to the imagination, similar to these allegories of Aristophanes. Indeed, such dramatic metaphors may be reckoned among the most powerful instruments in the hands of a great master. Had Dante conceived a masque upon the politics of Italy, we doubt not but that he would have employed some energetic symbols of this sort; and in passing, it may be said that no artist has appeared in modern times so capable of constructing an allegorical drama in the style of Aristophanes as Dante. The symbolism of the *Wasps* is somewhat different from that with which we have been dealing. In this play the chorus were armed, no doubt, with

Symbolic  
metaphors.

The *Wasps*  
and the  
*Plutus*. |

lance-like stings; but there was no attempt on the poet's part, as in the case of the *Clouds* and *Birds*, to maintain the illusion of their being wasps. They talk and act like old men; their waspishness is merely metaphorical, and the allegory ends in an appeal to the eyesight. The *Plutus*, on the other hand, presents an example of allegory in the strictly modern sense. It is a Greek anticipation of our moralities, of such a play as might be founded on a portion of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Wealth and Poverty appear upon the stage, and speak appropriately. Avarice and Prodigality are satirised. The use and abuse of riches are contrasted in a series of incidents framed with expressly moral purpose. The whole play is singularly un-Aristophanic. We have here no "Weltvernichtungssee"—no nightingales or climbing apes, to speak of. For this very reason it has been copied in modern times (its inner nature rendering it capable of adaptation to our tastes) by Ben Jonson in the *Staple of News*, and by Goethe in the second part of *Faust*.

The *Thesmophoriazuse*.

One word must be devoted to the *Thesmophoriazuse*. In the history of dramatic literature, the chief interest of the play is that it differs from the other works of Aristophanes in its structure. It has a regular plot—an intrigue and a solution—and its persons are not allegorical but real. Thus it approaches the standard of modern comedy. But the plot, though gigantic in its scale, and prodigious in its wealth of wit and satire, is farcical. The artifices by which Euripides endeavours to win Agathon to undertake his cause, the disguise of Mnesilochus in female attire, the oratory of the old man against the women in the midst of their assembly, his detection, the momentary suspension of the dramatic action by his seizure of the supposed baby, his slaughter of the swaddled wine-jar, his apprehension by Cleisthenes, the devices and disguises by which Euripides (in parody of his own tragic scenes) endeavours to extricate his father-in-law from the scrape, and the final ruse by which he eludes the

Scythian bowmen, and carries off Mnesilochus in triumph—all these form a series of highly diverting comic scenes. There is no passage in Aristophanes more amusing than the harangue of Mnesilochus. The other women have abused Euripides for slandering their sex in his tragedies. Mnesilochus, the humorous and coarse old rustic, gets up in his flimsy female gear, and eloquently reminds them of the truths which Euripides *might* have divulged. One crime after another is glibly and facetiously recorded, until the little heap of calumnies uttered by Euripides disappears beneath the mountain of confessions piled up by the supposed matron. The portrait, too, of Agathon in the act of composition is exquisitely comic. By comparing it with that drawn by Plato in the *Banquet*, we may to some extent estimate the amount of truth in Aristophanic caricature. The meaningless melodious style—the stream of honeyed words,<sup>1</sup> *summi delumbe salivæ*—with which Agathon and his Chorus greet our ears, is scarcely more a parody of his poetry than the speech on love is of his prose. Agathon is discovered lying on a sofa, arrayed in female garments and smelling of cosmetics; when asked why thus attired, he lisps a languid answer that he is composing a tragedy about women, and wants to be in character :—

The harangue of Mnesilochus.

Caricature of Agathon.

“The poet ought to keep in harmony  
With any subject that he has to treat :  
If women be his theme, then must his person  
Be toned and fashioned to a female mood ;  
But when he writes of men he has no need  
To study change ; 'tis only what we have not,  
We seek to supplement by dressing up.  
Besides, how unæsthetic 'tis to see

<sup>1</sup> Mnesilochus' criticism reminds us of Persius :—

ὥς ἡδὺ τὸ μέλος ὦ πότνια Γενετυλλίδες,  
καὶ θηλυδριῶδες καὶ κατεγλωττισμένον  
καὶ μανθαλωτόν, ὥστ' ἐμοῦ γ' ἀκρωμένον  
ὑπὸ τὴν ἔδραν αὐτὴν ὑπῆλθε γάργυλος.<sup>1</sup>

*Thesm.* 130.

A poet coarse and hairy ! Just remember  
 Famed Ibycus, Anacreon, Alcæus,  
 Who made our music and our metres flow,  
 Wore caps, and followed soft Ionian fashions :  
 And Phrynichus—this surely you have heard—  
 Was beautiful, and beautifully dressed ;  
 And this, we cannot doubt, is why his plays  
 Were beautiful, for 'tis a natural law  
 That like ourselves our work must ever be."

Caricature  
 of Euripides.

Modern writers upon whose lips *in udo est Mænas et Attis* might take some of this satire not inaptly to themselves. But the crowning sport of the *Thesmophoriazuszæ* is in the last scene, when Mnesilochus adapts the *Palamedes* and the *Helen* of Euripides to his own forlorn condition, jumbling up the well-known verses of these tragedies with coarse-flavoured rustical remarks ; and when at last Euripides himself acts Echo and Perseus to the Andromeda of his father-in-law, and both together mystify the policeman by their ludicrous utterance of antiphonal lamentations.

Athenian  
 women.

I have but scanty space for touching on one of the topics which the *Thesmophoriazuszæ* suggests—the satire of Aristophanes upon Athenian women, whom he invariably represents as profligate, licentious, stupid, drunken, thieves and liars. Whether they were in any sense as bad as he has painted them—and he has given them a worse character than any other Greek poet, not even excepting Simonides of Amorgos—or whether their absence from the comic spectacles encouraged a paradoxical misrepresentation of their worst and most exceptional qualities, is not easy to decide. This at least is clear that, while comic exaggeration is obvious in every detail, the picture, overdrawn and coarse as it may be, accords with that of other and less copious Greek satirists ; nor could it have been tolerated in a society where women held a station of respect and honour.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of the most interesting chapters in Greek history still remains to be written. It should deal in detail with the legal and domestic position of free women at Athens, with the relation of their sons and

The point of the *Thesmophoriazuseæ*, so far as the women are concerned, is that while Aristophanes pretends to show up Euripides for his abuse of them, his own satire is far more searching, and penetrates more deeply into the secrets of domestic life. What are the crimes of Phædra in comparison with the habits he imputes to Athenian wives and daughters? The *Lysistrata* will not bear discussion; but in passing I may notice the humour of the oath by wine which the inexorable heroine and her Spartan friend administer. Other oaths might be broken, but no Athenian wife or maid would incur the penalty of this dread imprecation: "If I fail, may the bowl be filled with water." Of the three comedies which treat of women, the *Ecclesiazuseæ* has the most permanent interest. Indeed, *mutatis mutandis*, its satire might almost be adapted to the present day, or to the future which our theorists upon the rights of women are preparing. The Athenian ladies disguise themselves as men, and crowd the assembly, where they out-vote their husbands, sons, and

Satire on women in the *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazuseæ*.

husbands to Hetairai, and with the whole associated subject of pederastia. Since this chapter on Aristophanes was first published, Dr. Mahaffy has done much in his excellent book on *Social Life in Greece* toward clearing up our views upon these matters. But the topic still requires a fuller and more scientific handling. Dr. Mahaffy is particularly felicitous in marking the distinctions of the Herodotean, Thucydidean, and Euripidean estimates of women, in bringing into prominence the *Æconomicus* of Xenophon, and in laying stress upon the warfare of opinion which raged at Athens between conservatives of the Periclean tradition, represented by Aristophanes, and innovators, represented in poetry by Euripides, in philosophy by Plato. I cordially agree with him in his remark that "in estimating women at this time, the Alcestis and Macaria of Euripides are too high, and the women of Aristophanes are too low" (*Social Greece*, 2nd ed. p. 228). The great difficulty which must have been felt by all thoughtful students of Greek literature, is how to reconcile the high ideals of female character, presented by the Attic tragedians, with the contemptuous silence of Thucydides, with the verdict of Plato upon women-lovers as compared with boy-lovers, with the ribaldry allowed to comic poets, and with the comparative absence of female portraits in the biographies of great Athenians composed by Plutarch.

The Parlia-  
ment of  
women.

brothers, and proclaim the supremacy of women in the state. Praxagora, the agitator of the scheme, is chosen Strategis. She decides that a community of property and free trade between the sexes are the two things wanted to ensure general felicity. The point of the satire consists in this: that the arguments by which the women get the upper hand, all turn on their avowed conservatism; men change and shift, women preserve their old customs, and will maintain the type of the state; but no sooner have they got authority than they show themselves more democratic than the demagogues, more new-fangled in their political notions than the philosophers. They upset time-honoured institutions and make new ones to suit their own caprices, squaring the laws according to the logic of feminine instincts. Of course speculations like those of Plato's *Republic* are satirised in the farcical scenes which illustrate the consequences of this female revolution. But perhaps the finest point about the comedy is its humorous insight into the workings of women's minds—its clear sense of what a topsy-turvy world we should have to live in if women were the lawgivers and governors.

Aristo-  
phanes and  
Plato.

In quitting Aristophanes I am forced to reflect upon the inadequacy of my attempts to interpret the secret of his strength and charm. The epithets which continually rise to our lips in speaking of him—radiant, resplendent, swift, keen, changeful, flashing, magical—carry no real notion of the marvellous and subtle spirit that animates his comedy with life peculiar to itself. In dealing with no other poet is the critic or historian so powerless. No other work of art leaves so incommunicable an impression on the mind of the student. As for my words about Aristophanes, they are "sound and fury signifying nothing:" to be known, he must be read with admiration and delight. But those who have submitted themselves to the influence of his genius, will understand what I mean when, in conclusion, I say that, with Plato and Aristophanes for guides, we can to some extent reconstruct

the life of the Athenians, animate the statues of Myron and Lysippus, and see the aisles of the Parthenon or the benches of the Pnyx crowded with real human beings. Plato introduces us to the graver and more elegant side of Attic life, to the *καλοκαγαθοὶ* and *χαρίεντες*, to men of sober tastes and good birth and exquisite breeding. Aristophanes acquaints us with men of pleasure, vulgar and uneducated characters, haunters of the law courts and the market-place and the assembly. From Plato we learn what occupied philosophers and people of distinction. Aristophanes tells us the popular jokes at Athens, how the political and military edicts recorded by Thucydides were familiarly discussed, how people slept and walked, and dressed, and dined. In Plato's Dialogues the fine Greek intellect is shown to us trained and tutored into exquisite forms of elevated culture. In Aristophanes, though art even more consummate has been used, we see the same refined intellect running riot and disporting itself with the flexibility of untameable youth. By Plato we are taught how dignified and humane the Greeks could be, by Aristophanes how versatile and human they were.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE COMIC FRAGMENTS

Three Periods in Attic History—The Three Kinds of Comedy: Old, Middle, New—Approximation of Comedy to the Type of Tragedy—Athenæus as the Source of Comic Fragments—Fragments of the Old Comedy—Satire on Women—Parasites—Fragments of the Middle Comedy—Critique of Plato and the Academic Philosophers—Literary Criticism—Passages on Sleep and Death—Attic Slang—The *Demi-Monde*—Theophrastus and the Later Rhetoricians—Cooks and Cookery Books—Difficulty of defining the Middle from the New Comedy—Menander—Sophocles and Menander—Epicureanism—Menander's sober Philosophy of Life—Goethe on Menander—Philemon—The Comedy of Manners culminated in Menander—What we mean by Modernism—Points of Similarity and difference between Ancient and Modern Comedy—The Freedom of Modern Art.

Three  
periods in  
Attic  
history.

THE two centuries during which comedy flourished at Athens may be divided into three marked periods of national and political existence. Between 448 and 404 B.C., under the Periclean administration and until the end of the Peloponnesian War, the Demos or sovereign people continued through all vicissitudes conscious of sovereignty and capable of indefinite expansion. Then came the dismantlement of Athens by Lysander and the dismemberment of the old democracy. From 404 to 338 B.C., Athens, though humbled to the rank of a second-class State, and confused in foreign and domestic policy, retained her freedom, and exercised an important influence over the affairs of Hellas. She no longer, however, felt within herself the force of youth, the ambition of conquest, or the pride of popular autocracy. Her intellectual activity



was turned from political and constitutional questions inwards to philosophy and literature. From 338 to about 260 B.C. this metamorphosis of the nation was carried further and accomplished. Athens ceased to be a city of statesmen and orators, and became the capital of learning. She was no longer in any true sense free or powerful, though populous and wealthy and frequented by cultivated men of all nations. Not only had public interest declined, but the first fervour for philosophy was past. A *modus vivendi* suited to a tranquil, easy, pleasure-loving people, who rejoiced in leisure and combined refined amusements with luxury, had been systematised in the Epicurean view of life. To accept the conditions of existence and to make the best of them, to look on like spectators at the game of the world, and to raise no troublesome insoluble questions, was the ideal of this period. Fifty years after the last date mentioned, the Romans set their foot on Hellas, and Greek culture began to propagate itself with altered forms in Italy.

To these three periods in the national existence of Athens, the three phases through which comedy passed, correspond with almost absolute accuracy. Emerging from the coarse Megarian farces and the phallic pageants of the Dionysian Kômos, the old comedy, as illustrated by Aristophanes, allowed itself the utmost license. It incarnated the freedom of democracy, caricaturing individuals, criticising constitutional changes, and, through all its extravagances of burlesque and fancy, maintaining a direct relation to politics. Only a nation in the plenitude of self-contentment, conscious of vigour and satisfied with its own energy, could have tolerated the kind of censorship these comic poets dared to exercise. The glaring light cast by Aristophanes upon abuses in the state reminded his audience of the greatness and the goodness that subsisted with so much of mean and bad. From their high standpoint of security they could afford, as they imagined, to laugh, and to enjoy a spectacle that travestied their imperfec-

Three  
phases of  
Attic  
comedy

Legal restrictions on the license of the Old Comedy.

tions. At the same time an under-current of antagonism to the Aristophanic comedy made itself felt from time to time. Laws were passed prohibiting this species of the drama in general (*μὴ κωμῳδεῖν*), or restricting its personality (*μὴ κωμῳδεῖν ὀνομαστὶ*), or prohibiting the graver functionaries of the State from exhibiting comic plays. These laws, passed, abrogated, and repassed, between 440 and 404 B.C., mark the ebb and flow of democratic liberty. After the humiliation of Athens at the close of the Peloponnesian War, the political subject-matter of the old comedy ceased to exist, and the attitude of the audience was so altered as to render its peculiar censorship intolerable. Meanwhile, the speculative pursuits to which the Athenians since the days of the sophists had addicted themselves, began to tell upon the character of the nation, now ripe for the second or literary stage of comedy. The poets of this period had not yet arrived at the comedy of manners which presents a close and faithful picture of domestic life. They directed their wit and humour against classes rather than characters. Philosophers and poets, parasites and *hetærae*, took the place of the politicians. Nor did they abandon the old art-form of Attic comedy, for it is clear that the Chorus still played an important part in their plays. At the same time, in comedy as in tragedy, the Chorus came to be less and less an integral part of the drama; and while more attention was paid to plot and story, the grotesque allegories of the first period were dropped. The transition from the old to the middle comedy is signalled by the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, which, maintaining the peculiar character of the elder form of art, relinquished politics for literature. The new comedy, known to us through the fragments of Menander and the Latin imitations, abandoned the Chorus altogether, and produced a form of art corresponding to what we know as the comedy of character and manners in the modern world. Interest was concentrated on the fable, and the skill of the poet was displayed in accurate delineations of domestic scenes.

Qualities of the Middle Comedy.

The New Comedy.

The plot seems to have almost invariably turned on love adventures. Certain fixed types of character—the parasite, the pimp, the roguish servant, the severe father, the professional captain, the spendthrift son, the unfortunate heroine, and the wily prostitute—appeared over and over again. To vary the presentation of these familiar persons taxed the ingenuity of the playwright, as afterwards in Italy and France, during the tyranny of pantaloons and matamores, Leandre and prima amorosa.<sup>1</sup>

Tragedy and comedy, though they began so differently, had been gradually approximating to one type, so that between Menander and the latest followers of Euripides there was scarcely any distinction of form and but little difference of subject-matter. The same sententious reflections upon life seasoned both species of the drama. The religious content of the elder tragedy and the broad burlesque of the elder comedy alike gave place to equable philosophy. The tragic climax was sad; the comic climax gay: more license was allowed in the comic than in the tragic iambic: comedy remained nearer to real life and therefore more interesting than tragedy. Such, broadly speaking, were the limits of their differences now. In this approximation toward artistic similarity, comedy rather than tragedy was a gainer. It is clear that the Aristophanic comedy could not have become permanent. To dissociate it from the peculiar conditions of the Athenian democracy was impossible. Therefore the process by which the old comedy passed into the middle, and the middle into the new, must be regarded as a progression from the local and the accidental to the necessary and the universal. The splendour that may seem to have been

Blending of  
Tragedy and  
Comedy in  
a mixed  
form of art.

<sup>1</sup> In my work upon Carlo Gozzi (John C. Nimmo, London, 2 vols.) I have published a historical essay upon the so-called *Commedia dell' Arte*, or improvised Comedy with fixed types of character, which flourished in Italy and France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The similarity between this form of dramatic art and what we know about the later Comedy of Athens is very striking.

sacrificed, belonged less to the old comedy itself than to the genius of Aristophanes, who succeeded in engrafting the most brilliant poetry upon the rough stock of the Attic farce. Tragedy, on the contrary, lost all when she descended from the vantage-ground of Æschylus. It must not, however, be imagined that the change in either case depended upon chance.

Growth of  
criticism  
and philo-  
sophy.

It was necessitated by the internal transmutation of the Athenians into a nation of students, and by the corresponding loss of spontaneity in art. For the full development of the comedy of manners a critical temper in the poet and the audience, complexity of social customs, and inclination to reflect upon them, together with maturity of judgment, were required. These conditions, favourable to art which seeks its motives in a spirit of tolerant, if somewhat cynical, philosophy, but prejudicial to the highest serious poetry, account for the decline of tragedy and the contemporaneous ascent of comedy in the fourth century B.C. The comedy of Menander must therefore be considered as an advance upon that of Cratinus, though it is true that this comedy is the art of refined and senescent, rather than of vigorous and adolescent civilisation, and though it flourished in the age of tragic dissolution.

Marble  
busts of  
Tragedy and  
Comedy.

In the Vatican are preserved two colossal busts in marble, of equal size and beauty, wrought apparently by the same hand, and finished to the point of absolute perfection. One of these is Tragedy, the other Comedy. The two faces differ chiefly in the subtle smile that plays about the lips of Comedy, and in the slight contraction of the brows of Tragedy. They are twin sisters, born alike to royalty, distinguished by such traits of character as tend to disappear beneath the polish of the world. There is no suggestion of the Cordax in the one or of the Furies in the other. Both are self-restrained and dignified in ideality. It was thus that the two species of the drama appeared to the artists of the later ages of Hellenic culture.

The student of Greek fragments may not inaptly be compared to a man who is forming a collection of seaweeds

Walking along the border of the unsearchable ocean, he keeps his eyes fixed upon the pools uncovered at low tide, and with his foot turns up the heaps of rubbish cast upon the shore. Here and there a rare specimen of coloured coralline or delicately fibred alga attracts his attention. He stoops, and places the precious fragment in his wallet, regretting that all his wealth is but the alms of chance, tossed negligently to him by the fretful waves and wilful storms. To tread the submarine gardens where these weeds and blossoms flourish, is denied him. Even so the scholar can do no more than skirt the abysses of the past, the unsearchable sea of oblivion, garnering the waifs and strays offered him by accident.

Flotsam and jetsam from the classic past.

As Stobæus provides the most extensive repertory of extracts from the later Greek tragedians, so it is to Athenæus we must turn for comic fragments. This glutton of books boasted that he had read eight hundred plays of the middle comedy, and it is obvious that he was familiar with the whole dramatic literature of Athens. Yet the use he made of this vast knowledge was comparatively childish. Interested for the most part in Deipnosophy, or the wisdom of the dinner-table, he displayed his erudition by accumulating passages about cooks, wines, dishes, and the Attic market. From an exclusive study, therefore, of the extracts he transmitted, we might be led to imagine that the Greek comedians exaggerated the importance of eating and drinking to a ridiculous extent. This, however, would be a false inference. The ingenuity of the Deipnosophist was shown in bringing his reading to bear upon a single point, and in adorning the philosophy of the kitchen with purple patches torn from poetry. We ought, in truth, rather to conclude that Attic comedy was an almost inexhaustible mine of information on Attic life in general, and that illustrations, infinitely various, of the manners, feelings, prejudices, literature, and ways of thinking of the ancient Greeks might have been as liberally granted to us as the culinary details which amused the mind of Athenæus.

The Deipnosophists of Athenæus.

Susarion,  
Pherecrates,  
Telecleides.

When so much remains intact of Aristophanes, it is not worth while to do more than mention a few of the fragments preserved from the other playwrights of the old comedy. The first of these in Meineke's collection may be translated, since it stands, like a motto, on the title-page of all Greek comedy: <sup>1</sup> "Hear, O ye people! Susarion says this, the son of Philinus, the Megarian, of Tripodiscus: Women are an evil; and yet, my countrymen, one cannot set up house without evil; for to be married or not to be married is alike bad." In turning over the pages of Meineke, <sup>2</sup> we feel inclined to call attention to the beauty of some lines on flowers written by Pherecrates (*Metalles*, fr. 2, and *Persai*, fr. 2), and to a curious passage on the changes wrought by Melanippides, Kinesias, and Timotheus in Attic music (*Cheiron*, fr. 1). The comic description of the Age of Gold by Telecleides (*Amphictyones*, fr. 1) might be paralleled by Heine's picture of heaven, where the geese flew about ready roasted with ladles of sweet sauce in their bills. "Peace was as plentiful as water for the hands. Earth bore no frights or plagues, but all necessities grew spontaneously. Every torrent-bed ran with wine; wheaten loaves and barley bread quarrelled for the privilege of being swallowed; fishes broiled themselves and lay down at the tables; a river of broth rolling hot meats ran round the couches; conduits of rich soups and sauces flowed for all who listed; sugared cakes were heaped on platters; roast thrushes with milk-biscuits flew down people's throats; there was a wailing of buns that jostled round about men's jaws; the children played at dice with tit-bits cut from swine's paunches; all the folk were fat and huge as giants." What Hermippus says about the Attic market (*Phormophoroi*, fr. 1) is interesting for a different reason, since it throws real light upon the imports into Attica. The

<sup>1</sup> Compare Anaxandrides (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1); Eubulus (*Chrysilla*, fr. 2, *Nannion*, fr. 1); Alexis (*Manteis*, fr. 1, *Incert. Fab.* fr. 34, 39); and the anonymous fragments on p. 756 of Didot's *Comici Græci*.

<sup>2</sup> I shall use the edition of Didot, one vol., 1855, for reference.

second fragment from the same comedy yields curious information about Greek wines. After mentioning the peculiar excellences of several sorts, the poet gives the palm to Sappias, so called because of its old, mellow, richly scented ripeness. "When the jar is opened, a perfume goes abroad of violets and roses and hyacinths, a wonderful scent that fills the house. This nectar is ambrosia and nectar in one. Keep it for my friends, but to my enemies give Peparethian." Eupolis supplies a description of parasites (*Kolakes*, fr. 1): the first detailed picture of a class that played a prominent part in Attic social life.<sup>1</sup> We may also mention, in passing, the fragment of a parabasis (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1) which censures the Athenian audience for preferring foreign to native poets, and contains a reference to Aristophanes. Phrynichus yields the beautiful epitaph on Sophocles (*Mousai*, fr. 1) already quoted;<sup>2</sup> nor must his amusing caricature of a bad musician be passed over (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1), for the sake of this line:—

Hermippus,  
Eupolis,  
Phrynichus,  
Plato.

Μουσῶν σκελετὸς, ἀηδόνων ἡρίαλος, ὕμνος Ἄιδου,

"Mummy of Muses, ague of nightingales, hymn of Hades."

Those who are curious about Greek games will do well to study the description of the cottabos in Plato (*Zeus Kakoumenos*, fr. 1), and to compare with it a fuller passage from Antiphanes<sup>3</sup> (*Aphroditēs Gonai*). Plato, again, presents us with a lively picture of a Greek symposium (*Lacones*, fr. 1), as well as a very absurd extract from a cookery book, whereof the title was

<sup>1</sup> Compare Antiphanes (*Didymoi*, fr. 2, *Progonoi*, fr. 1); Alexis (*Kubernetes*, fr. 1); Diodorus (*Epikleros*, fr. 1); Timocles (*Drakontion*, fr. 1); the long passage from an uncertain play of Nicolaus. The invention of the part of the Parasite is usually ascribed to Alexis, but this is clearly a mistake. That he developed it and made it a fixed character of comedy is probable enough. The *Symposium* of Xenophon furnishes curious matter on the professional joker and diner-out, as he existed at Athens.

<sup>2</sup> See above, vol. i. p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> The following anonymous line (Didot's *Comici Graeci*, p. 732), *συνεπινομέν τε καὶ συνεκοτταβίζομεν*, "together we drank, and played at cottabos together," seems to point to the good fellowship of the game.

Ameipsias,  
Lysippus.

Φιλοξένου καινή τις Ὀψαρτυσία, "A new Sauce-science by Philoxenus" (*Phaon*, fr. 1). From Ameipsias might be selected for passing notice an allusion to Socrates (*Konnos*, fr. 1) and a scolion in two lines upon life and pleasure, sung to the flute at a drinking-party (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1). Finally, Lysippus has spoken the praises of Athens in three burlesque iambics<sup>1</sup> (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1): "If you have never seen Athens, you are a stock; if you have seen her, and not been taken captive, a donkey; if you are charmed and leave her, a pack-ass."

The Middle  
Comedy.

On quitting the old for the middle comedy we find ourselves in a different intellectual atmosphere. The wit is more fine-spun, the humour more allusive; language, metre, and sententious reflections begin alike to be Euripidean. The fertility of the playwrights of this period was astounding. Antiphanes, one of the earliest, produced, according to some authorities, 260, and Alexis, one of the latest, 245 comedies on a great variety of subjects. It is doubtful, however, whether the authorship of these plays was accurately known by the Byzantine Greeks, from whom our information is derived. The fragments show that a strong similarity of style marked the whole school of poets, and that the younger did not scruple to pilfer freely from the elder. On the whole, the question of authorship is of less interest than the matters brought to light by such extracts as we possess. It has been remarked above that ridicule of the philosophers and parodies of the tragic poets were standing dishes in the middle comedy. Antiphanes has a fling at the elegant attire of the academic sages (*Antaios*), while Ephippus describes a philosophical dandy of the same school (*Nauagos*, fr. 1, p. 493). It seems to have been the fashion of the young disciples to wear "a white mantle of fine wool, a dainty tunic, a soft felt hat, and an elegant little walking-stick." Their doctrines are assailed with mild sarcasm.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the praises of Athens quoted from anonymous comic poets by Athenæus, i. 20 B, and by Dio Chrysost., 64, p. 334, Reiske (Didot's *Comici Græci*, pp. 723, 729).



A man, when asked if he has a soul, replies: "Plato would tell me I don't know, but I rather think I have" (Cratinus, *Pseudupobolimaïos*, p. 516). In another play some one is gently reminded that he is talking of things about which he knows nothing—like Plato (Alexis, *Ankylion*, p. 518). Again, Plato is informed that his philosophy ends in knowing how to frown<sup>1</sup> (Amphis, *Dexidemides*, p. 482). In another place it is discovered that his *summum bonum* consists in refraining from marriage and enjoying life (Philippides, *Ananeosis*, fr. 2, p. 670). Other philosophers, the Pythagoreans (Alexis, *Tarantini*, frs. 1, 2, 3, pp. 565, 566), and Aristippus (*Gulatea*, fr. 1, p. 526), for example, come in for their share of ridicule. The playwrights not unfrequently express their own philosophy, sad enough beneath the mask of mirth. Not very cheerful, for example, is the view of immortality recorded by Antiphanes (*Aphrodisios*, fr. 2, p. 358): "Mourn moderately for your relatives. They are not dead, but have gone before upon the same road which we shall all be forced to travel. We too shall arrive at that great caravanserai, and pass the whole of future time in company with them." The comparison by Alexis of human life to a mad pastime enjoyed between two darknesses (p. 566) has something in it that reminds one of a dance of death: "Do you not know then that this so-called life is a name given in joke, a pleasant euphemism for the fate of men? Examination proves that everything which mortals do and suffer is but a mere madness. We who live are sent out, as it were, from death and darkness into a kind of festival, this light and frolic. He who spends the time allowed him in laughing, drinking, wenching, and takes the most of his share in the feast, will go back happiest." Very seldom has the insecurity of all things, leading to devil-may-care self-indulgence, been more elegantly expressed than by Antiphanes (*Stratiotes*, fr. 1, p. 397): "There is nothing sure and certain, except what the day

Satire on  
the sages.

Antiphanes  
and Alexis  
on human  
life.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Alexis (*Hippeus*, p. 536; *Meropis*, p. 550; *Olympiodorus*, p. 552; *Parasitus*, fr. 3, p. 558).

affords of pleasure. Even this cannot be called secure. There is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip. Only when the mouthful is between your teeth, can you call it really yours." Anaxandrides, for his part, formulates theological agnosticism in words memorable for their pithy brevity (*Canephorus*, p. 422):—

ἅπαντές ἐσμεν πρὸς τὰ θεῖ' ἀβέλτεροι  
 κοῦκ ἴσμεν οὐδέν·

"We're all mere dullards in divinity  
 And know just nothing."

Hedonistic  
 scepticism.

One thing is clear in all such utterances, that the deeper speculations of Plato and Aristotle had taken no hold on the minds of the people at large, and that such philosophy as had penetrated Athenian society, was a kind of hedonistic scepticism. Epicurus, in the next age, had nothing to do but to give expression to popular convictions. Take, for one instance more, these lines from Amphis (*Gynæcocratia*, p. 481):—

πίνε, παίξε· θνητὸς ὁ βίος· ὀλίγος οὐπὶ γῇ χρόνος.  
 ἀθάνατος δ' ὁ θάνατός ἐστιν, ἂν ἅπαξ τις ἀποθάρῃ.

"Drink and play, for life is fleeting; short our time beneath the sky:  
 But for death, he's everlasting, when we once have come to die."

Occasionally, the same keen Attic wit is exercised upon old-fashioned Greek proverbs. Simonides had said that health, beauty, and moderate wealth were the three best blessings. Anaxandrides demurs (*Thesaurus*, fr. 1, p. 421): the poet was most certainly mad; for a handsome man, if he be poor, is but an ugly beast.

Remarks  
 upon the  
 drama.

A few of the fragments throw some light upon dramatic literature. Antiphanes (*Poesis*, fr. 1, p. 392) compares tragedy and comedy with covert irony: "Blest indeed is the lot of a tragic play, for, to begin with, the spectators know the whole legend by the name it bears, and then, when the poet gets tired, he has only to lift the machine like his finger, and, hocus-pocus, all is ended; but in a comedy everything must be made from the beginning and explicitly set forth—persons,

previous circumstances, plot, catastrophe, and episode—and if a jot or tittle is overlooked, Tom or Jerry in the pit will hiss us off the stage.” The cathartic power of tragedy is described by Timocles (*Dionysiazuse*, p. 614), in lines that sound like a common-sense version of Aristotle: “Man is born to suffer, and there are many painful things in life; accordingly he has discovered consolation for his sad thoughts in tragedies, which lure the mind away to think of greater woes, and send the hearer soothed, and at the same time lessoned, home—the poor man, for example, finds that Telephus was still more poor, the sick man sees Alcmæon mad, the lame man pities Philoctetes and forgets himself; if one has lost a son, Niobe is enough to teach him resignation; and so on through all the calamities of life: gazing at sufferings worse than our own, we are forced to be contented.”

Some of the most charming of the comic fragments are *Sleep*. descriptions of sleep. A comedy, variously ascribed to Antiphanes and Alexis, bears the name of *Sleep*, and contains a dialogue (p. 570), of which the following is a version:—

- A. Not mortal, nor immortal, but of both  
 Blent in his being, so that gods nor men  
 Can claim him for their own; but ever fresh  
 He grows, and then dies off again to nothing,  
 Unseen by any, but well known to all.  
 B. Lady, you always charm me thus with riddles.  
 A. Yet what I say is clear and plain enough.  
 B. What boy is this that has so strange a nature?  
 A. Sleep, O my daughter, he that cures our ills.”

Scarcely less delicate are the two following lines (pp. 749, 607):—

ὅ τι προῖκα μόνον ἔδωκαν ἡμῖν οἱ θεοὶ,  
 τὸν ὕπνον,

and—

ὕπνος τὰ μικρὰ τοῦ θανάτου μυστήρια.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “The only free gift which the gods gave men,  
 To sleep.”

“Sleep, that prepares our souls for endless night.”

In this connection I may quote a beautiful fragment from Diphilus (*Incert. Fab. fr. 5*, p. 647) on Death and Sleep :—

“There is no life without its share of *evK*,  
Griefs, persecutions, torments, cares, diseases :  
Of these death comes to cure us, a physician  
Who gives heart's ease by filling us with slumber.”

**Attic slang.** Before engaging in a group of fragments more illustrative of common Greek life, I will call attention to the examples of Attic slang furnished by Anaxandrides (*Odysseus*, fr. 2, p. 424). To translate them into equivalent English would tax the ingenuity of Frere; but it is worth noticing that this *argot*, like that of our universities or public schools, is made up of the most miscellaneous material. Religious ritual, the theatre, personal peculiarities, the dust that is the plague of Athens, articles of dress, and current fables, all supply their quota. It is, in fact, the slang of cultivated social life.

**The hetairæ.** Next to cooks, parasites, and fishwives, the *demi-monde* of Athens plays the most prominent part in comedy of the middle period.<sup>1</sup> The following couplet from a play of Philetærus (*Kunegis*, fr. 3, p. 477) might be chosen as a motto for an essay on this subject :<sup>2</sup>—

οὐκ ἐπὶς ἐταίρας ἱερὸν ἔστι πανταχοῦ,  
ἀλλ' οὐχὶ γαμετῆς οἴδαμου τῆς Ἑλλάδος.

This pithily expresses the pernicious relation in which the mistress, dignified by the name of companion, stood in Attic Hellas toward the married wife. The superiority of the former over the latter in popular appreciation is set forth with cynical directness by Amphis (*Althamas*, fr. 1, p. 480): “Is not the hetaira far pleasanter to live with than the wife? The reason is obvious. Married women stay at home, disdainful and in

<sup>1</sup> The great subject of cooks I leave for discussion in relation to the New Comedy. See below, pp. 210-212.

<sup>2</sup> “It is not by mere accident that you find a temple everywhere to the hetairæ and none to married women anywhere in Hellas.”

dudgeon. The others know that they must purchase a man by concessions to his tastes, or else go in search of another."

The Greeks had no sort of shame about intersexual relations; and of this perfect freedom of speech the comic poets furnish ample illustration in their dealing with the subject of adultery. There is not here the faintest trace of French romance. Sentiment of some kind is required to season the modern breaches of the seventh commandment. To the Greeks, who felt the minimum of romance in intersexual love, adultery appeared both dangerous and silly, when the laws of Solon had so well provided safety-valves for vice.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the pages of the comic poets abound in violent invectives against licentious and avaricious women who were the ruin of young men. Anaxilas (*Neottis*, fr. 1, p. 501), in a voluble invective against "companions" of this sort, can find no language strong enough. They are serpents, fire-breathing chimæras, Charybdis and Scylla, sea-dogs, sphinxes, hydras, winged harpies, and so forth. Alexis describes the arts whereby they make the most of mean attractions, and suit their style to the current fashion (*Isostasion*, fr. 1, p. 537). Epicrates paints the sordid old age of once-worshipped Lais in language that reads like a classic pendent to Villon's *Regrets de la belle Heaulmière* (*Antilais*, fr. 2, p. 510). The lines in question might be written as a motto under that terrible picture (ascribed to Titian) in the Accademia at Venice of the toothless hag holding a scroll inscribed *Col Tempo*—"this have the years brought me to." In no point does the civilised society of great cities remain so constant as in the characteristics of Bohemian life. In this respect Athens seems to have been much the same as Venice in the sixteenth, and Paris in the nineteenth century.

What these playwrights say of love in general scarcely differs from the opinions already quoted from the tragic poets.

<sup>1</sup> The passages alluded to above are Eubulus (*Nannion*, fr. 1, p. 449), Xenarchus (*Pentathlos*, fr. 1, p. 624), and Philemon (*Adelphoi*, fr. 1).

Prose ver-  
sions of  
comic  
scenes.

Amphis (*Dithyrambus*, fr. 2, p. 482), and Alexis (*Helené*, p. 532; *Traumatias*, fr. 2, p. 569; *Phedrus*, fr. 1, p. 571; *Incert. Fab.* fr. 38, p. 582), may be referred to by the curious. It is worth while at this point to mention that some valuable illustrations of the later Attic comedy are to be drawn from the collectors of characteristics like Theophrastus, and from rhetoricians who condensed the matter of the comic drama in their prose. The dialogues of Lucian, the letters of Alciphron, the moral treatises of Plutarch and Maximus Tyrius, and the dissertations of Athenæus are especially valuable in this respect. Much that we have lost in its integrity is filtered for us through the medium of scholastic literature, performing for the middle comedy imperfectly that which Latin literature has done more completely for the new.

Position of  
cooks at  
Athens.

In dealing with the old comedy, one reference has been already made to cooks and cookery books. In the middle comedy they assume still more importance, and in the secondary authors of the new comedy they occupy the foreground of the picture, thanks to Athenæus. Cooks at Athens formed a class apart. They had their stations in the market, their schools, their libraries of culinary lore, their pedantries and pride, and special forms of knavery. The Roman custom of keeping slaves to cook at home had not yet penetrated into Greece. If a man wanted to entertain his guests at a dinner-party, or to prepare a wedding feast, he had to seek the assistance of a professional *cordón bleu*, and the great *chef* ensconced himself for the day, with his subordinates, in the house of his employer. It is clear that these customs offered situations of rare comic humour to the playwright. Everybody had at some time felt the need of the professional cook, and everybody had suffered under him. In an age, moreover, which was nothing if it was not literary, the cooks caught the prevailing tone, and professed their art according to the rules of rhetoric.

εἰς τοὺς σοφιστὰς τὸν μάγειρον ἐγγράφω<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Mid the philosophers I count the cook."

exclaims one of the characters of Alexis (*Milesia*, fr. 1, p. 551), after a scientific demonstration of the sin of letting sauces cool. Literary and philosophical cooks. A paterfamilias in a play of Strato (*Phoenikides*, p. 703) complains that he has brought a "male sphinx" in the shape of a cook into his house. The fellow will not condescend to use any but Homeric language, and the master is quite puzzled. It is in vain that he takes down the Homeric glossary of Philetas. Even this does not mend matters. The cook is a more recondite scholar than the grammarian. A professor of the culinary art in a play of Nicomachus (*Eileithuia*, p. 717) explains to his employer the broad scientific basis upon which the art of cooking rests. Astrology, geometry, medicine, and natural history are all necessary. Another in Damoxenus (*Syntrophoi*, p. 697) discusses various schools of philosophy from the culinary point of view. He begins by saying that he has spent four talents and nearly three years in the school of Epicurus, and has learned that a cook who has not mastered metaphysic is worthless. He must have Democritus and Epicurus at his fingers' ends, understand the elements of fire and water, comprehend the laws of harmony, and arrive at a profound contempt for Stoical self-discipline.<sup>1</sup> The study of cookery books employs as much time and demands as much enthusiasm as the study of the sages. A cook in Baton (*Euergetæ*, p. 685) shakes off sleep and trims the midnight oil that he may meditate the weighty precepts of his masters in the art.<sup>2</sup> Another in Euphron (*Adelphi*, p. 679) expounds the various virtues of his predecessors, and remarks that his own peculiar merit consists in clever larceny. The same author makes a cook explain to his pupil the distinctions he ought to observe in catering for a club and for a wedding-

<sup>1</sup> Compare Sosipater (*Katapseudomenos*, p. 677) for a similar display of science; Euphron (*Incert. Fab.* fr. 1, p. 682) for a comparison of cooks with poets; Hegesippus (*Adelphi*, p. 676) for an egregious display of culinary tall-talk.

<sup>2</sup> Pollux mentions a list of celebrated authors on cookery.

High life below stairs.

party (*Synepheli*, p. 682). One of the fragments of Menander turns, finally, upon the art of treating guests of different nationalities to different dishes (*Trophonius*, p. 46). In this passage Menander seems to have had in mind some lines of Diphilus (*Apolipousa*, fr. 1, p. 633). Another curious extract from the latter poet (*Zographus*, fr. 2, p. 638) consists of a long harangue delivered by a master cook to his *protégé*, a waiter, concerning the advantages and disadvantages of various houses into which he gains admittance by his art. A merchant just returned from sea, a spendthrift heir, and a leader of the *demi-monde* are good customers because of their prodigality. On the whole, the impression left upon our minds is that, what with democracy, all-pervading pedantry, and professional pride, high life below stairs in Athens was even more difficult to tolerate than it is in England.

The New Comedy.

To draw a firm line of demarcation between the middle and the new comedy would be impossible. I have already expressed my opinion that the comic drama culminated, within the limits determined for it by antique society, in the art of Menander. The modulations through which it passed before attaining to this final stage were numerous, and there are indications that the types invented for the middle comedy persisted in the new. What really created the third manner, and carried the comic art to its perfection, was the appearance of a truly original genius in the person of Menander. The playwrights who succeeded could not fail to feel his influence, and plied their craft within the sphere he had traced.

Menander.

Menander was the nephew of Alexis, the pupil of Theophrastus, the exact contemporary and intimate friend of Epicurus. From his uncle he received the traditions of dramatic art; from his master he learned the peripatetic method of analysis; together with his friend he put in practice the philosophy of *ἀταραξία* (quietism, freedom from passionate disturbance) which passes by the name of Epi-



cureanism. His adequacy to the spirit of his own age can only be paralleled by that which we observe in Sophocles. As Sophocles exactly represents the period of Attic perfection, so the sadder and more sober years of disillusionment and premature decay find full expression in Menander. His personal beauty, the love of refined pleasure that distinguished him in life, the serene and genial temper of his wisdom, the polish of his verse, and the harmony of parts he observed in composition, justify us in calling Menander the Sophocles of comedy. Like Sophocles, he showed the originality of his genius by defining the limits of his art. He perfected the comic drama by restricting it more closely to real life. The love-tales—*ἔρωτες καὶ παρθένων φθοραὶ*—which Anaxandrides is said to have introduced, became the fixed material of the new comedy. Menander, however, used this subject-matter less for sensational effect or sentimental pathos than for the expression of a deep and tranquil wisdom. If we were to judge by the fragments transmitted to us, we should have to say that Menander's comedy was ethical philosophy in verse; so mature is their wisdom, so weighty their language, and so grave their tone. The brightness of the beautiful Greek spirit is sobered down in him almost to sadness. Middle age, with its maturity, has been substituted for youth with its passionate intensity. Taking Menander for our guide, we cannot cry: "You Greeks are always children." Yet the fact that Stobæus found him a fruitful source of sententious quotations, and that alphabetical anthologies were made of his proverbial sayings, ought not to obscure his fame for drollery and humour. The highest praise awarded by the Romans to Terence is contained in the apostrophe *dimidiatè Menander*; and it appears that what the Latin critics thought their poet wanted, was the salt of Attic wit, the playful ease and lively sparkle of his master. It is certain that well-constructed plots, profound analysis of character, refined humour, and ripe philosophy were blent

The  
Sophocles  
of comedy.

and subordinated to the harmony of beauty by Menander. If old men appreciated his genial or pungent worldly wisdom, boys and girls read him, we are told, for his love-stories. One thing at least he never could have been—loud or vulgar. And for this reason, perhaps, we learn less from Menander about parasites and cooks than from his fellow-dramatists.

Sobriety and  
gravity of  
Menander.

Speaking broadly, the philosophy in vogue at Athens during the period of the new comedy was what in modern days is known as Epicureanism. This is proved by the frequent references made by playwrights to pleasure as the *summum bonum*,<sup>1</sup> as well as by their view of life in general. Yet it would be unjust to confound the grave and genial wisdom of Menander with so trivial a philosophy as that which may be summed up in the sentence "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."<sup>2</sup> A fragment from an unknown play of his expresses the pathos of human existence with a depth of feeling that is inconsistent with mere pleasure-seeking (p. 56):—

"When thou wouldst know thyself, what man thou art,  
Look at the tombstones as thou passest by :  
Within those monuments lie bones and dust  
Of monarchs, tyrants, sages, men whose pride  
Rose high because of wealth, or noble blood,  
Or haughty soul, or loveliness of limb ;  
Yet none of these things strove for them 'gainst time :  
One common death hath ta'en all mortal men.  
See thou to this, and know thee who thou art."

Such moralising sounds commonplace to us, who have been lessoned by the *memento mori* of the Middle Ages. Yet it should be remembered that, coming from a Greek of Menander's age, it claims originality of insight, and even now a ring of freshness as well as of truth marks its absolute sincerity. The

<sup>1</sup> See in particular Hegesippus (*Philetari*, p. 676); Baton (*Androphonus*, fr. 1, p. 684, and *Synexapaton*, fr. 1, p. 686), and Damoxenus (*Syntrophoi*, pp. 697, 698).

<sup>2</sup> The fragment from the 'Αλιεύς, p. 3 of Didot's *Menander*, is clearly dramatic, and cannot be taken as an expression of the poet's mind.

following fragment (p. 58) again expresses Stoical, rather than Epicurean, philosophy of life :—

Stoic-  
Epicurean  
acceptance  
of life.

“ Being a man, ask not release from pain,  
But strength to bear pain, from the gods above ;  
If thou wouldst fain escape all woe for aye,  
Thou must become god, or, if not, a corpse.”

The exquisite lines in which the life of man is compared to a fair, wherefrom, when he has once seen the shows, he should be glad to pass away again in quiet, might be adduced to prove, if it were necessary, that Menander was no mere hedonist. This fragment I have attempted to paraphrase in the following sonnet :—

“ Whom the gods love, die young ; that man is blest  
Who having viewed at ease this solemn show  
Of sun, stars, ocean, fire, doth quickly go  
Back to his home with calm uninjured breast.  
Be life or short, or long, 'tis manifest  
Thou ne'er wilt see things goodlier, Parmeno,  
Than these ; then take thy sojourn here as though  
Thou wert some playgoer or wedding-guest.  
The sooner sped, the safelier to thy rest,  
Well-furnished, foe to none, with strength at need,  
Shalt thou return ; while he who tarries late,  
Faints on the road out-worn, with age oppressed,  
Harassed by foes whom life's dull tumults breed ;  
Thus ill dies he for whom death long doth wait.”

To the same end might be quoted the passage upon destiny, which explains that chance and providence are only two names for one controlling power, face to face with which human forethought is but smoke and nonsense.<sup>1</sup> There is something even almost awful in the placid acquiescence of Menander. He has come to the end of passions and pleasures ; he expects pain and is prepared to endure it ; his happiness consists in tranquil contemplation of life, from

<sup>1</sup> These fragments are from the *Τροβαλίμαιοι*, pp. 48, 49.

Tranquil  
cheerful-  
ness.

which he no longer hopes for more than what Balzac calls the *à peu près* of felicity.<sup>1</sup> This tranquillity does not diminish but rather increases his power of enjoyment and the clearness of his vision. He combines the exact knowledge of the scientific analyst with judicial impartiality ; and yet his worldly wisdom is not cold or dry. To make selections from fragments, every word whereof is golden, would be weary work ; nor is it possible to preserve in translation the peculiar savour of this Attic salt. Menander should be spared this profanation. Before we leave him, let us remember what Goethe, a man as like Menander as a modern man can be, has said of him : "He is thoroughly pure, noble, great, and cheerful, and his grace is unattainable. It is to be lamented that we possess so little of him, but that little is invaluable."

Philemon.

The name of Philemon will always be coupled with that of Menander. In their lifetime they were competitors, and the Athenian audience preferred Philemon to his rival. Posterity in ancient days reversed this judgment—with justice, if our scanty fragments may be taken as sufficient basis for comparison. The lines in which Philemon praises peace as the Good vainly sought by sages, and declares that no painter or statuary can compete with truth, are fair examples of his fluent and at the same time polished style.<sup>2</sup> So are the comparison of men with animals to the disadvantage of the former, and the invective against Prometheus for dividing human nature into complex varieties of character.<sup>3</sup> Yet there is an element of sophistry in these examples, placing them below the pithy sayings of Menander. If I were to choose one fragment as illustrative of Philemon, and at the same time favourable to his reputation, it should be the following :<sup>4</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Compare Βοιωρία, fr. 2, p. 9 ; Μισογύνης, fr. 1, p. 32 ; Πλόκιον, fr. 8, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 114, 115.

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 118, 119.

<sup>4</sup> *Incert. Fab.* fr. 26, p. 122. Cf. *ib.* fr. 86.

“Have faith in God and fear ; seek not to know him ;  
 For thou wilt gain nought else beyond thy search :  
 Whether he is or is not, shun to ask :  
 As one who is, and sees thee, always fear him.”

The comedy of Menander determined the form of the drama in Rome, and, through the influence of Plautus and Terence upon the nascent culture of the sixteenth century, fixed the type of comedy in modern Europe. We are often struck, in reading his fragments, with their modern tone of thought and feeling. We recognise that here, as in the case of Molière, is a man who “chastised men by drawing them as they are,” and that the men whom he chastised, the social follies he ridiculed, are among us at the present day. This observation leads us to consider what we mean by modernism, when we say we find it in ancient literature. Sometimes the phrase is loosely used to indicate the permanent and invariable qualities of human nature emergent from local and temporary conditions. The Chorus in the *Agamemnon* upon the beautiful dead warriors in the Trojan war is called modern because it comes home directly to our own experience. Not their special mode of sepulture, or the lamentation of captive women over their heaped-up mounds, or the slaughter of human victims, or the trophies raised upon their graves, are touched upon. Such circumstances would dissociate them, if only accidentally, from our sympathies. It is the grief of those who stay at home and mourn, the pathos of youth and beauty wasted, that Æschylus has chosen for his threnos. This grief and this pathos are imperishable, and are therefore modern, inasmuch as they are not specifically ancient. Yet such use of the phrase is inaccurate. We come closer to the true meaning through the etymology of the word modern, derived perhaps from *modo*, or *just now* ; so that what is modern is, strictly speaking, that which belongs to the present moment. From this point of view modernism must continually be changing, for the moment now is in perpetual flux. Still,

Modernity  
 in ancient  
 literature.

there is one characteristic of the now which comprehends the modern world, that does not and cannot alter: we are never free from the consciousness of a long past. *Nous vieillards nés d'hier* is essentially true of us; and to this characteristic may be referred what we mean to express by modernism. When nations have reached a certain growth and pitch of culture, certain sentiments, affectations, ways of thinking, modes of self-expression, habits of life, fashions, and the like, appear as the outcome of complex and long-established social conditions. Whatever may be the political groundwork of the national existence, the phase in question is sure to manifest itself, if only the nation lasts for a sufficient length of time. We, who have assuredly arrived at the climacteric in question, when we recognise the signs of it elsewhere, call them modern; and nowhere can we find them more emphatically marked than in the age of Attic ripeness that produced Menander. "O Menander and life," said the grammarian of Alexandria, "which of you is the imitator of the other?" This apostrophe might also have been addressed to Homer; but what made it more specially applicable to Menander was that, while Homer invested the profound truths of passion and action with heroic dignity, Menander drew a no less faithful picture of human life together with the accidents of civilised and social circumstance. His delicate delineation of Attic society seemed nearer to the Alexandrian scholar, because it reproduced, not the remote conditions of the prehistoric age, but those which are common to periods of advanced culture. For a like reason he seems to us more obviously modern than Homer. He contemplates the drama of human life with eyes and mind not very differently trained from ours, and from a point of view close to ours. As a single instance, take this fragment. He is quietly laughing at the pompous and pretentious sages who said in Athens, as they say now, that a man must go into the wilderness to discover truth:—

Modern  
touches in  
Menander.

εὐρετικὸν εἶναι φασὶ τὴν ἐρημίαν  
οἱ τὰς ὁφρὺς αἶροντες.

"The desert is the mother of discovery,  
Say supercilious sages."

We must not, however, be blinded by the modernism of Menander to the fact that ancient comedy differed in many most important respects from the comedy of modern Europe. If we only regard dramas of intrigue and manners, such as the *Mandragola* of Machiavelli, the *Volpone* of Ben Jonson, or the *Fourberies de Scapin* of Molière, we are indeed dealing with a type of comedy derived directly through the Latin from the Greek. But modern comedy does not remain within these narrow limits. Its highest products are either works of pure creative fancy, like Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and Fletcher's *Pilgrim*, or are so closely allied to tragedy, as in the case of Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and Molière's *Avare*, that only a nominal difference divides the two species. Nothing remains, either in fragments or in critical notices, to justify us in believing that the ancients developed either the serious comedy, essentially tragic in its ruthless revelation of a hell of evil passion, or the comedy of pure imagination. Their strict sense of the requirements of external form excluded the former kind of drama, while for the creation of the latter the free play of the romantic fancy was absolutely necessary. The total loss of Agathon, Chærémon, and other tragic poets of the post-Euripidean period, forces us to speak with reservation on this topic. There are many indications of a confusion of types at Athens during the fourth century B.C. analogous to that which characterises modern dramatic poetry. Yet it may be asserted with tolerable confidence that, while the Greeks understood by comedy a form of art that aimed at exciting mirth and was confined within the limits of domestic life, modern comedy has not unfrequently in her higher flights excited the passions of terror and pity, and has quitted the region of diurnal prose for the

Ancient and  
modern  
comedy.

dream-world of fairyland. An ancient critic would have probably observed that Molière's *Avare* was too seriously sinister to be rightly called comic, and that the absence of parody or burlesque in Shakespeare's *Tempest* excluded that play from comparison with the *Birds* of Aristophanes. Here, then, as elsewhere, we have to notice the greater freedom demanded by the modern fancy in dealing with the forms of art, together with the absence of those firmly-traced critical canons to which the antique genius willingly submitted. Modern art in general, when it is not directly and consciously imitative of antique models, demands a more complete liberation of the spiritual element. We cannot avoid æsthetical extravagances which are connected with our altered habits of thought and feeling. This superior freedom involves a bewildering complexity and intermixture of the serious and the ludicrous, the lyrical and the dramatic, the positive and the fanciful, defying classification, and in its very caprice approximating to the realities of existence.



## CHAPTER XX

### HERONDAS

Prose and Idyllic Treatment of Comic Situations—Lucian and Alciphron—Discovery of Herondas—The Mimiambi—The Go-Between—The Ruffian—The Schoolmaster—The Women sacrificing to Asklepios—The Jealous Woman—The Gossips.

It has elsewhere been remarked that the Idyllic poets made use of dramatic material already familiar to the Greeks of the best periods. Theocritus can be fairly accredited with basing certain of his idylls on the interludes of Epicharmus and the mimes of Sophron. This practice of working up scenes from early comedies into refined forms of art became more fashionable as literature in course of time assumed a scholastic and rhetorical character. Unlike their Roman imitators, the Greeks could not translate Menander and Philemon; but they were able to appropriate the wealth of those great dramatists in part at least to the uses of literature which yearly became more and more the plaything of their learned leisure. In this way, we now have means at our disposal for forming a tolerably accurate idea of what we have lost in the Middle and New Comedy of Athens. Lucian, in this process of literary reconstruction, adopted the form of the dialogue. Alciphron preferred that of the epistle. Those elegant letters which he composed upon a variety of topics introduce us to eminent personages like Menander and Hyperides, Phryne and Thais. They also accurately paint the manners of parasites, pimps, money-lenders, professional beauties. We are taken to

Literary  
treatment  
of situations  
from old  
comedies.

picnics of young men and ballad-girls, to parties of philosophers, to rustic rambles of gay women, to contests of beauty between ladies of the *demi-monde*. Although Alciphron's *dramatis personæ* include a variety of persons from all ranks of society and numerous professions, by far the larger part of his writings relate to women and their lovers.

Discovery of  
Herondas.

One of those lucky accidents which justify the hope that fresh discoveries of antique classics may be yet in store, has recently brought to light seven compositions by another author of this type. They were found, I believe, in papyrus manuscripts, which had been used to stuff a mummy-case in Egypt—much as one employs waste-paper to wad a box containing valuable glass or china.

His relation  
to Sophron  
and Hip-  
ponax.

Herondas, or Herodas as he is also called by Greek grammarians, wrote what are known as *Mimiambi*.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, he reproduced the substance and followed the form of the mime, which was a short dramatic interlude in prose. But while imitating the creator of that species (Sophron), Herondas adopted the limping iambic, which Hipponax invented. The result is a kind of comedy very close in manner to the dramatic idylls of Theocritus, and partaking of the spirit of the Babrian fable.

His nation-  
ality.

That Herondas was an Ionian from some island of the Ægean seems probable. He lays the scene of two of his poems at Cos. He talks, in another, of Chios and Erythræ; but we cannot determine his birthplace. Nor is it possible at present to ascertain his date with absolute accuracy. In the first mime he introduces a panegyric on Alexandria, her monarch, her museum, etc., which might point to the reign of Ptolemy Euergetes. The very conditions, however, under which this sort of literature was produced, render it uncertain whether we are dealing with contemporary allusions or with

<sup>1</sup> There is, on the whole, I think, better reason to keep the name Herodas. But as the recent editions of Bücheler and Crusius adopt Herondas, this may be provisionally used.

the *réchauffé* of some previous writer. In the third mime a naughty schoolboy is supposed to be studying the work of Maro. Now no Greek classic of that name exists, and it would be natural, at first sight, to assume that the Maro in question was no other than Vergilius Maro, the Latin poet. We should, in that case, have to choose at least the second century after Christ for the date of Herondas. However, the dramatic setting of the allusion makes it impossible that Kottalos, the schoolboy, could have been reading Virgil. He is obviously a Greek boy, and so grossly illiterate that he can hardly have acquired a foreign language. If, then, this Maro has to be identified with Virgil, we must suppose that Herondas, when he wrote the mime, was translating a Latin original. These details illustrate the present difficulty of assigning a date to Herondas.

There is, however, a passage in the fourth mime which re- His date.  
 duces these uncertainties almost to a vanishing point. A party of ladies are examining the works of art which ornamented the temple of Asklepios at Cos. Among other things they stop to admire a fresco by Apelles. The points they select, and the expressions they use, while praising the vividness and beauty of this picture, indicate that the painter had only recently died. The author of the dialogue seems to be meeting adverse criticism, and in one phrase he hints that people yet alive might have known Apelles in the flesh. This would place Herondas not later than 250 B.C. Many minor details of style, diction, and allusion confirm a date approximating to that period.

Unlike his master Hipponax, Herondas, so far as we are The Mimi-  
ambi.  
 acquainted with him, did not indulge in personal satire. His sketches bring little scenes of Greek life vividly before us. They are tinged with a certain satiric humour, like that which gives pungency to the fifteenth Idyll of Theocritus. But their object is to be amusing, and in this they undoubtedly succeed. Again, though personages of a vulgar or repulsive type are

introduced, and though indecent topics are discussed, the language is never intolerably coarse. I propose, then, to venture upon a translation of the six least mutilated compositions of this newly discovered Greek poet. This is perhaps the best way of making him known to English readers. It must be added, however, that the text is still so doubtful as to preclude authoritative and exact interpretation. Many important readings rest upon conjectures. Whole passages are corrupt, and owe such coherence as they now possess to a series of brilliant and mutually contradictory guesses. The poet, in places where his manuscript offers no textual difficulty, often employs words which are not found in any lexicon. His allusions and his slang lend themselves to several methods of elucidation. What makes these critical perplexities more trying is, that we have no certain indication of the changes in the dialogue. It stands to reason that, in the explanation of an obscure phrase, everything turns upon finding out which of the interlocutors made use of it. Yet, up to date, we are not able to establish this with confidence. I am, therefore, well aware that no translation of Herondas at the present time can aspire to literary quality, and that the best will be found full of blunders, when the microscopical analysis of several generations shall have wrought agreement upon all the numerous disputed passages.

**The Go-  
Between.**

**THE GO-BETWEEN**

SCENE—A PRIVATE HOUSE, where METRICHA, a young wife, in the absence of her husband, MANDRIS, on the sea, is seated alone within reach of a female slave, THRESSA. GYLLIS comes to pay a visit.

*M.* Thressa, some one is knocking at the house door. Won't you run to see whether a visitor has arrived from the country?

*T.* Who knocks?

*G.* It's me.

*T.* Who are you? Are you afraid to come near?

*G.* Well then, see, I have come up.

*T.* Who are you, say?

*G.* Gyllis, the mother of Philænon. Tell Metricha inside there that I'm here.

*M.* Invite her in. Who is she?

*T.* Gyllis.

*M.* Grandam Gyllis! (*To the slave.*) Turn your back a minute, girl. (*To Gyllis.*) Which of the Fates has coaxed you into coming, Gyllis, to our house? What brings you here like a deity to mortals? I verily believe it must be five months or near it since you, Gyllis, even in a dream, so help me, Fate, were seen by any one approaching this door.

*G.* I live a long way off, child, and in the lanes the mud is up to one's knees; besides, I have no more strength than a fly. Old age is dragging us down, and the shadow stands anear and waits.

*M.* Tut, tut! Don't calumniate time in that way! You're strong enough yet, Gyllis, to throttle your neighbours.

*G.* Jeer on! That's the way with you young women.

*M.* Pray don't take fire at what I said.

*G.* Well, then, my girl, how long do you mean to go on like a widow, in loneliness, wearing out your solitary bed? From the day when Mandris set sail for Egypt, ten moons have come and gone, and he does not send you so much as a letter. Truly, he has forgotten, and has drunken at fresh fountains. There, ah, there is the palace of the goddess! For everything, I tell you, that is found upon this earth, or can be found, grows in abundance there in Egypt: riches, gymnasia, power and might, fair sunny skies, glory, splendid shows, philosophers, gold, blooming youths, the temple gardens of twin gods, a king of the best, a museum, wine, all the good things one's heart can wish for, women in bebies—I swear by Hades, the heavens above boast not so many stars,—lovely too as were the goddesses what time they came to Paris for the prize of beauty: (may they not hear me saying this!) But you, poor thing, what is your sort of spirit that you sit and warm that chair? Will you let old age overtake you unawares, and ashes consume your youth? Take another course; for two or three days change your mind: in jocund mirth set up with some new friend! The ship that rides at one anchor is not safely moored. No mortal knows the future. Life is uncertain ever.

*M.* What are you talking about?

*G.* Is there any one near who can overhear us?

*M.* None that I know of.

*G.* Listen, then, to what I have come to tell you after all this time: Gryllus, the son of Matakini, Patæcius' wife, the fellow who

has conquered in five contests—as a boy at the Pythian games, twice at Corinth with youths in bloom, twice at Olympia with full-grown pugilists—he owns a pretty fortune too, without having to stir a finger, and as regards the Queen of Love, he is a seal unbroken. The man I'm talking of saw you at the Descent of Misa ; fell desperately in love ; his bowels burned for you ; and now he will not leave my dwelling night or day, my girl, but makes lament to me, and wheedles, and is ready to die of his love-longing. Nay, come, child, Metricha, grant me this one peccadillo. Adjust yourself to the goddess ; else will old age, who looks towards you, take you unawares. By doing this you'll get paid twice. See, then, obey my counsels. I love you, by the Fates.

*M.* Gyllis, whiteness of hair blunts the edge of understanding. As I hope for the return of Mandris and for Demeter to befriend me, I could not have taken words like these from any other woman, but should have taught the lame to sing lame, and turned her out of doors. I beg you never to come to me again with messages of this kind. Tales that are fit for wantons, go tell to silly girls. Leave Metricha, Pytho's daughter, to warm her chair. Nobody laughs at Mandris with impunity. But, as they say, that's not what Gyllis needs to hear. (*Calling to the slave-girl.*) Thressa, rub up the black bowl of whelk ; pour in three pints of pure wine, mix with water, and give it us to drink in a big cup. Here, Gyllis, drink !

The rest of the dialogue is too corrupt to be translated. But it appears that Gyllis begins to make excuses for her ill-considered embassy, drinks freely, praises the excellence of Metricha's cellar, takes her leave with compliments, and goes off commending herself to more facile damsels.

*The Ruffian.* The next mime consists of a speech addressed to a Greek jury by the plaintiff in an action brought against a wealthy sea-captain for assault and battery. The plaintiff is himself a low fellow well known to the whole town for his bad life and infamous vocation ; yet he assumes the tone of a practised counsel, breaks out into telling sallies against the character of the defendant, causes the statutes to be read aloud by the clerk of the court, produces a witness, and concludes with a patriotic peroration. The whole piece reads extraordinarily like the parody or burlesque of some Attic

oration: Æschines against Timarchus, or Lysias against Simon, for example. I must add that the opening lines of this speech are too corrupt to admit of translation.

### THE RUFFIAN

SCENE—A COURT OF JUSTICE in the town of Cos. BATTALOS addresses the JURY.

If that fellow, just because he sails the sea or wears a mantle worth three minæ, while I abide on land and drag about a thread-bare cloak and rotten slippers, is to carry away by force one of my own girls without my consent, and that by night, mark you—I say the security of the city, gentlemen, will be gone, and what you take such pride in, your independence, will be abolished by Thales. His duty it was, knowing who he is and moulded out of what clay, to live as I do, trembling with fear before the very lowest of the burghers. But now those men among you who are shields of the city, and who have far more right to brag about their birth than he—they respect the laws, and not one of the burghers ever cudgelled me, foreigner as I am, nor came to break into my house at night, nor set fire to it with torches, nor carried away with force one of my young women. But that Phrygian who is now called Thales, but was formerly Artimnes, gentlemen of the jury, has done all these things, and has had no regard for law or prefect or archon. (*Turns to the clerk.*) Well, I suppose, clerk, you had better take and read the statute on assault with violence; and do you stop the bung-hole of the water-clock, my friend, till he has finished, so that I may not, as the proverb runs, be throwing good money after bad.

*[Battalos makes the clerk read out a passage of the law, while he bids the slave of the court stop the clepsydra, which times the length of his oration.]*

And if a free man assault a slave-woman, or carry her away by force, he shall pay double damages.

*[The clerk stops reading. Battalos goes on with his speech.]*

Those words, gentlemen of the jury, were written by Chæronidas and not by Battalos, the plaintiff in this suit against Thales. If one shall break a door, let him pay a mina, says the lawgiver; if he strike with the fist, another mina; if he burn the house or force entrance, a thousand drachmas; and if he inflict personal injury,

the penalty shall be double. For *he* dwelt in a city, Thales ; but you have no knowledge of any city, nor indeed of how a city is administered. To-day finds you in Bricindera, yesterday in Abdera ; to-morrow, if some one gives you passage-money, you will sail maybe to Phaselis. To cut the matter short, gentlemen of the jury, and not to weary you with digressions, I suffered at the hands of Thales what the mouse did when the pitch caught him. I was pummelled, the door of my house was broken in (for which I pay a third as rent) and the lintel overhead was burned. (*Calls to the girl who had been carried off by Thales.*) Come hither, Myrtale, you also, and show yourself to all the folk ; don't be ashamed ; imagine to yourself that all the jurymen you're looking at are fathers, brothers. Just see, gentlemen, how she's been torn from top to bottom, how that unholy rascal tore her to tatters when he dragged her off by force ! Old age, to thee be sacrifices made ! Without you, he must have bled for it ! (*Turns round to Thales, or to some one in the court who is jeering.*) You laugh ? Well, I am a ruffian, and I don't deny it, and Battalos is my name, and my grandsire was Sisymbras, and my father, Sisymbriscus, and each and all of us whore-masters—there ! but as for pluck, I'd strangle a lion, if the brute were Thales. (*Addresses the defendant, Thales.*) Perhaps you are in love with Myrtale ? Nothing wonderful. I love my loaf. Give this, and you shall get that. Or else, by Jupiter, if you are in heat or so, stuff her price into the palm of Battalos ; go take and batter what belongs to you to your own heart's content. (*Addresses the jury.*) There is still one point, gentlemen of the jury,—this is the charge I make against yonder fellow—it remains with you, I say, in the absence of witnesses, to pronounce sentence by the rules of equity—should he, however, want to put slaves to the test of torture, I am ready to offer myself also. Here, Thales, take and put me to the rack ; only see that the damages are paid into court first. Minos could not make more fair division and distinction by his weighing scales. For the rest, gentlemen of the jury, forget that you are voting for or against Battalos, the brothel-keeper. Think that you are acting for all the foreigners established in your town. Now is the time for Cos and Merops to show what they are good for, Thessalus and Herakles the worth of their renown, Asklepios why he removed from Tricca, and for what cause Phœbe gave birth to Leto here. Considering all these matters, hold the helm of justice with right judgment, so that the Phrygian, having felt your lash, may become the better for his punishment, if so be that the proverb transmitted to us from antiquity doth not speak untruth.



The third mime, which follows, gives us sufficient insight into the behaviour of a thoroughly ill-conducted vagabond of a schoolboy. His main vice was gambling in low company. That is the point in the incident of his mistaking Maron for Simon. Pollux informs us that Simon was one of the names for a cast of dice.

The School-  
master.

### THE SCHOOLMASTER

SCENE—A SCHOOL for BOYS, in which there are statues of the MUSES. LAMPRISCUS, the master, is seated there. Enter METROTIMA, dragging her unwilling son KOTTALOS.

M. May the dear Muses send you something to enjoy, and may you have pleasure in life ; so you will promise to drub this boy of mine, till the soul of him, drat it, is left nowhere in his body but the lips. He has ruined me by playing pitch and toss. Yes, Lampriscus, it seems that knuckle-bones are not enough for him ; but he must needs be running after worse mischief. Where the door of the grammar-master stands, or when the cursed tax-day comes round—let me scream like Nannakos—he cannot tell. But the gambling-place, where street-porters and runaways take up their quarters, is so well known to him that he will point it out to strangers. The unhappy tablets, which I take the pains to spread with wax each month, lie abandoned by his bed-post next the wall, unless perchance he casts a glance on them as though they were the devil ; and then, instead of writing something nice, he rubs them bare. His dice—that litter about among the bellows and the nets—are shinier than our oil-flask which we use for everything. But as for spelling out a word, he does not even know his alpha, unless one shouts it five times in his ears. The day before yesterday, when his father was teaching him Maron, what did the pretty fellow do but go and turn Maron into Simon ? so that I am driven to call myself a fool for not making him a donkey-boy, instead of putting him to study in the hope of having a support for my declining years. Then if we make him repeat some child's speech—I, or his father, an old man with bad eyes and deaf,—the words run out of his head like water from a bottle with a hole in it. "Apollo, the hunter !" I cry out ; "even your granny will recite what one asks, and yet she has no schooling—or the first Phrygian you meet upon the road." But it's no use scolding, for if we go on, he runs

away from home, stays out three days and nights, sponging upon his grandmother, a poor old blind woman and destitute; or else he squats up there upon the roof, with his legs stretched out, like a tame ape, peering down. Just fancy what his wretched mother suffers in her entrails when she sees him there. I don't care so much about him indeed. But he smashes all the roofing into broken biscuits; and when winter comes, I have to pay two shillings for each tile, with tears of anger in my eyes. All the neighbours sing the same old song: "Yonder's the work of master Kottalos, that boy of Metrotima's." And true it is; and I daren't wag a tooth in answer. Look at his back too, how he's scratched it all over in the wood, till he's no better than a Delian fisher with the creel who doits his life away at sea. Yet he casts feast-days and holidays better than a professional star-gazer: not even sleep will catch him forgetting when you're off your guard. So I beseech you, Lampriscus, and may these blessed ladies give you prosperous life, and may you light on lucky days, do not . . .

*L.* Nay, Metrotima, you need not swear at him; it will not make him get the less. (*Calls to his pupils.*) Euthies, where are you? Ho, Kokkalos! ho, Phillos! Hurry up, and hoist the urchin on your shoulders; show his rump to the full moon, I say! (*Addresses Kottalos.*) I commend your ways of going on, Kottalos—fine ways, forsooth! It's not enough for you to cast dice, like the other boys here; but you must needs be running to the gambling-house and tossing coppers with the common porters! I'll make you more modest than a girl. You shan't stir a straw even, if that's what you want. Where is my cutting switch, the bull's tail, with which I lamm into jail-birds and good-for-nothings. Give it me, quick, before I hawk my bile up.

*K.* Nay, prithee, Lampriscus, I pray you by the Muses, by your beard, by the soul of Kottis, do not flog me with that cutting, but the other switch.

*L.* But, Kottalos, you are so gone in wickedness that there's not a slave-dealer who'd speak well of you—no, not even in some savage country where the mice gnaw iron.

*K.* How many stripes, Lampriscus; tell me, I beg, how many are you going to lay on?

*L.* Don't ask me—ask her.

*K.* Oh! oh! how many are you going to give me, if I can last out alive?

*M.* As many as the cruel hide can bear, I tell you.

[*Lampriscus begins to flog the boy.*]

*K.* Stop, stop, I've had enough, Lampriscus.

*L.* Do you then stop your naughtiness !

*K.* Never, never again will I be naughty. I swear, Lampriscus, by the dear Muses.

*M.* What a tongue you've got in your head, you ! I'll shut your mouth up with a gag if you go on bawling.

*K.* Nay, then, I am silent. Please don't murder me !

*L.* Let him go, Kokkalos.

*M.* Don't stop, Lampriscus, flog him till the sun goes down——

*L.* But he's more mottled than a water-snake——

*M.* And he ought to get at least twenty more——

*L.* In addition to his book ?—

*M.* Even though he learned to read better than Clio herself.

*K.* Yah ! yah !

*[The boy has been let loose, and is showing signs of indecent joy.]*

*M.* Stop your jaw till you've rinsed it with honey. I shall make a careful report of this to my old man, Lampriscus, when I get home ; and shall come back quickly with fetters ; we'll clamp his feet together ; then let him jump about for the Muses he hated to look down on.

The fourth mime might have furnished Matthew Arnold with another discourse on the nature of popular Greek religion. It has many points of similarity to the *Adoniazuse* of Theocritus. But its main interest consists in the allusions to plastic works of art—statues in the temple, wall-paintings in the sanctuary. The smug and unctuous person of the sacristan has also a particular value.

*The Women  
sacrificing to  
Asklepios.*

## THE WOMEN SACRIFICING AND PAYING VOWS TO ASKLEPIOS

SCENE—The TEMPLE of ASKLEPIOS at COS. Enter COAN women—KOKKALE, KUNNO, and their servants—to whom follows the GUARDIAN of the SHRINE.

*Ko.* Hail to thee, Monarch Paiôn, who rulest over Tricca, and hast thy habitation in delightful Cos and Epidaurus ; greetings to thee and to Coronis who gave thee birth, and to Apollo ; as also to her whom with right hand thou touchest, Hygieia ; you too, whose are these honoured altars, Panacea, Epione, Iaso, hail ; and ye who laid the dwellings and the walls of Laomedon waste, Podaleirios

and Machaon, healers of savage diseases, hail to you, together with all gods and goddesses that sojourn at thy hearth, Sire Païôn; propitiously accept, I pray, this cock, whilom the chanticleer of house and home, whom here I sacrifice; and take thereof the dainty bits. It is not much or serviceable that we draw from; else had we gladly brought an ox or fatted sow, and not a barn-door cock, in recompense for kind medicaments of fleshly ills, which thou didst wipe away, O King, laying thereon thy gentle hands.

*[She turns to her companion and begins to arrange the offerings.]*

*Ku.* Place the tablet, Kokkale, on the right hand of Hygieia.

*Then they look round the temple, and observe its works of art.*

*Ko.* Oh, my dear Kunno, what a sight of lovely statues! Tell me who was the sculptor who wrought this marble, and who was the man who set it up here?

*Ku.* The sons of Praxiteles. Don't you see that inscription on the pedestal? And Euthies, the son of Praxon, gave them to the temple.

*Ko.* I invoke the blessings of Païôn upon those craftsmen, and also on Euthies for such goodly workmanship. Look, dear, at that little girl there, lifting her eyes to the apple! Wouldn't one say that if she did not get the apple she would faint? And then, Kunno, that old man! Good gracious, how the boy is strangling the fox-geese!

*Ku.* Before our very noses, and unless we knew that it is stone, you would say that he were going to speak. Certes, the time is coming when men will be able to put life into senseless stones.

*Ko.* Yes; for, Kunno, see that statue of Battalë, Myttis' daughter, how it stands! If some one had never seen Battalë, and were to look at this portrait of her, he need not ask for flesh and blood.

*Ku.* Follow me, dear, and I will show you something, the like of which for beauty you never saw in your whole life. (*Turning to the servant.*) Kudilla, go and call the sacristan. What, ain't I talking to you, while you gaze around there? On my soul, but she won't attend to what I say! She stands and stares at me wider than a crab. Go, I say, and call the sacristan. You glutton, there's neither holy man nor layman who will call you worth your salt. It's all the same where you are. I take this god to witness, Kudilla, how you set me on fire with fury, though I do not want to rage. I take him to witness, I repeat, the day will come, when I shall make the razor shave your poll.

Ko. Don't make her stuff her head, Kunno, with all that at once! She is a slave, and dulness weighs like lead on slavish ears.

Ku. But day is breaking, and the crowd is pressing on all round. (*To the servant, who is setting off to look for the sacristan.*) Ho, you, stop! The gates have been thrown back, and the shrine is open.

[*The women go in, and examine the pictures on the walls.*]

Ko. My dear Kunno, only look, what lovely things! Wouldn't one say that another Athenë had come down to carve these beauties! (But may the Queen herself be blessed!) That naked boy there; if I were to pinch him, wouldn't he be wounded, Kunno? For the flesh is laid upon him, hot, hot, quivering on the panel. And the silver tongs—I swear if Mueleos, or Pataiskos, the son of Lamprion, could see them; their eyes would jump out of the sockets, thinking them to be real silver. That ox too, and the man who is leading him, and the woman walking with them, and the hook-nosed, and the snub-faced fellow, don't they all look just the living day? If I did not think it would be doing more than woman ought, I should have shrieked out for fear the beast would hurt me! He is glaring so with one eye, Kunno.

Ku. Yea, dear, for the hands of the Ephesian Apelles put the soul of truth into everything he painted; nor can one say, "That man could see one thing, and was denied another"; but whoever, even of the gods, it came into his mind to attempt, on he sped right forwards. If a man has seen him or his works without the due astonishment they merit, he ought to be hung up by the foot in a fuller's shop.

*The Sacristan.* (*Who enters, after having attended to the sacrifice of the cock.*) Ladies, your offerings have turned out fair, in all points perfect, and augur for the best. No one has afforded more gratification to Païon than you have done. Io, io, Païon! Be gracious for their fair sacrifices to these ladies, and if they are wedded, to their husbands, and their next of kindred. Io, io, Païon! May these things be!

Ko. Yea, let it be so, Mightiest! And send us to come again in health, and bring a costlier offering, in company with husbands and children.

Ku. Kottale, cut it up nicely, and remember to give the bird's leg to the sacristan; and place with pious words the honey mess into the serpent's hole; and sprinkle the sacrificial cakes; the rest we will take home and feast upon at table. Don't forget to carry them yourself and give me part of the health-offering.

The Jealous  
Woman.

The motive of the fifth mime introduces us to one of the least pleasant aspects of slave-life in Hellas. Unfortunate Gastron, the chattel of his mistress, was not only the instrument of her pleasures, but also, when he roused her jealousy, the victim of her ruthless cruelty. The bark of Bitinna, however, turns out to be worse than her bite. She winds up very much upon the keynote of a Boer "Tante" in a South African colony. Indeed, from her sudden yielding to Cydilla's supplications, and from Cydilla's own ratings at the stupid Pyrrhias, we may conclude that Bitinna only wanted to give Gastron a good frightening.

### THE JEALOUS WOMAN

SCENE—Courtyard of the house of a well-to-do widow called BITINNA.

*Dramatis Personæ:* BITINNA, her male slaves GASTRON and PYRRHIAS, and the female slave CYDILLA.

B. Tell me, Gastron, you, sir! are you grown so dainty that I cannot content you, but you must needs be running after Menon's Amphytæa?

G. I after Amphytæa! Did I ever see the woman you are talking off?

B. You're always putting off with excuses.

G. Bitinna, I am a slave; so do what you like with me. But don't go on sucking my blood night and day.

B. What a tongue you've got in your head, you! Cydilla, where is Pyrrhias? Call him up to me.

P. What's the matter?

B. Take this man and bind him. Do you still stand gaping? Quick, with the rope from the well-bucket there! (*To Gastron.*) If I do not have you half-flayed and exposed as an example to the whole quarter, by heavens, you may say I am no woman. If not, what then, you boor? I am the cause of all this, Gastron! I am! who took you up and made you a man and not a chattel! But if I was a fool then, you will not find Bitinna so besotted as you fancy any longer. (*To Pyrrhias.*) Bring it! Strip his tunic off, and bind him!

G. Don't, don't, Bitinna, by thy knees I pray thee.

B. Strip him, I say. (*To Gastron.*) You must be made to know that you are a slave, and that I paid down three minæ for

you. Ill-luck to the day when I brought you into this house !  
(*To Pyrrhias.*) Pyrrhias, are you going to cry ? I see you doing everything but bind him. Tie his elbows tight behind, and bind it till it cuts.

*G.* Bitinna, pardon me this one offence ; I am a man ; I have erred. But if you catch me again doing what displeases you, then brand me.

*B.* Keep your whinings for Amphytæa, I'll have none of them !

*P.* I've bound him like a trivet for you.

*B.* See that he does not wriggle himself loose. Take him to the whipping-place, to Hermon, and order the man to give him a thousand lashes on the back, a thousand on the belly.

*G.* Will you murder me, Bitinna, without even inquiring into the matter, whether it is true or false ?

*B.* But what you just said with your own tongue—"Bitinna, pardon me this one offence ?"

*G.* Well, I wanted to cool down your choler.

*B.* (*To Pyrrhias.*) Do you stand there like a stock and stare at me ? Take him away whither I told you. Cydilla, punch the scoundrel on the snout. And you, Draco, go after where he leads. Slave-girl, give the wretch a rag to cover him. We can't have him seen going naked through the public streets. A second time I tell you, Pyrrhias, and repeat my orders ; you shall make Hermon lay on a thousand here, a thousand there. Have you heard ? Because, if you disobey the least of my commands, it is you will have to pay both capital and interest. Go, get on your way, and don't take him round by Miccale's, but follow the straight road.—But now I have remembered something. (*To Cydilla.*) Girl, call them back ! Call, run your best, before they've got too far !

(*G.* Pyrrhias, wretched fellow, stone-deaf, she is calling you ! By heavens, one would think you were not hauling off your fellow-slave, but some tomb-robber ! Just as you're hauling him away to torment, Pyrrhias, I swear, Cydilla, with these two eyes of hers, shall see you within five days wearing out the shackles which you offered up but yesterday, with your own ankles at Antidorus.

*B.* Hallo, you ! Come back again with that fellow, bound tight just as you took him ! Now call Kosis the brander to come ; bid him come with his needles and ink. (*To Gastron.*) I'll turn you parti-coloured by one operation.

*C.* Nay, tati,<sup>1</sup> nay, but—so may Batyllis thrive, and you see her going to a husband's home, and hold her children in your

<sup>1</sup> Tati seems to be a term of coaxing or endearment.

arms—this time let the youth go. I beg you overlook this one offence.

*B.* Cydilla, do not vex me, or I shall run away from house and home. I, to let that sevenfold slave go loose! And who, prithee, meeting me on the streets, would not be justified in spitting at my face? No, by the Queen of Heaven! Since man though he be, he does not know himself, instantly shall he be made to know by bearing on his forehead the inscription I intend.

*C.* But it is the twentieth day, and the feasts of Neptune are upon the fifth.

*B.* For the present I'll let you go. (*To Gastron.*) Keep your thanks for her there whom I love no less than my Batyllis, since I brought her up with these hands of mine. But when we have poured libations to the dead, you shall keep feast at leisure, don't fear!

The Gossip-  
ing Friends.

The sixth mime furnishes a vivid little picture of two women talking secrets and diverging into scandal. It raises one point of interest which calls for comment. Three cobblers, all named Cerdo, are mentioned. Cerdo, afterwards, in Rome, became the common term for a shoemaker. But here Cerdo is a surname or something like it. We are clearly upon the track of traditional designations applied to personages of comedy—like the fixed masks of the Italian *Commedia dell' Arte*. The circumstances of Greek and Roman slavery favoured transitions from theatrical types to real life. A slave who had no other name was called Cerdo if he cobbled, Davus or Geta if he performed other functions in the household. In like manner, the names used by comic playwrights for their female characters adhered to persons following the same profession. The nurse, the prostitute, the go-between, acquired certain designations which would have been inappropriate to the matron. It is, therefore, not difficult in the literature we are dealing with—Herondas, Lucian, Alciphron, the Latin comic poets—to assign their proper quality and calling to the *dramatis personæ*, by paying attention to the names they answer to. The case is parallel to that of Arlecchino, Brighella, Truffaldino, Rosaura, Colombina, in Italian farce.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See my *Carlo Gozzi*, introduction, part i.



## THE GOSSIPING FRIENDS

SCENE—The PRIVATE APARTMENT of a LADY, who is seated with her maid-servant, when a friend arrives upon a visit. *Dramatis Personæ* : KORITTO, METRO.

K. Pray be seated, Metro. (*Turns to servant.*) Get up, and place a chair for the lady. I am obliged to order everything myself ; you, poor creature, would do nothing on your own account. By heaven, you're more like a stone than a living slave, lumbering about the house. But when I measure out your flour, you count the grains, and if the smallest atom dribbles from the sieve, you grumble and rumble the whole day until the very walls can't bear you. Now you dust the chair out and rub it bright, because you are obliged to, thief ! Sacrifice to her there, for if she had not been present, I'd have given you a taste of my hands.

M. Dear Koritto, we have each the same yoke to bear. I go about the whole day snapping like a dog and barking at those unutterable girls. But the reason why I came——

K. (*To the slave-girl.*) Out of our sight ; away with you, you popinjay ! All ears and tongue, the rest mere laziness.

M. I pray you, tell the truth, dear Koritto, who was it who sewed your scarlet baubo ?

K. Where did you see it, Metro ?

M. Nossis, Erinna's daughter, had it two days ago.

K. Nossis, where did she get it ?

M. You'll blab it abroad if I tell you.

K. By these precious eyes of mine, dear Metro, no one shall hear from Koritto what you please to tell me.

M. Well, Eubule, Bitas' daughter, gave it her, and said that nobody was to know.

K. Oh, the women ! That woman sooner or later is sure to make an end of me. She prayed and begged until I yielded and gave it to her, before I had even used it once myself. What does she do then but snatch it like a treasure-trove and go and make a present of it, and, what is worse, to quite improper people. A long farewell, say I, to such a friend ; let her look out for some other gossip to replace me. But for Nossis to use it, when I would not give her—and if I say more than a woman should, pray shut your ears, Adrasteia—no, not if I had a thousand, would I give her one that was rotten !

M. Nay, Koritto, don't let your gall rise to the nostrils on the

instant, when you hear something disagreeable. A proper woman ought to be able to bear everything. It's my fault for chattering so ; I ought to have my tongue cut out. But now, coming to the chief point I mentioned, who was it who made it ? As you love me, say. Why do you look at me and laugh so ? Is it the first time you have seen Metro, or why are you so delicate ? I conjure you, Koritto, tell me no fibs, but say who sewed it ?

K. Law, why d'you conjure me ? Cerdo sewed it.

M. Well, but what Cerdo ? There are two : one is a blue-eyed fellow, the neighbour of Mystalinē, that girl of Cylæthis, but he's not fit to sew a bow to a fiddle ; the other, who lives near the mansions which belong to Hermodorus, as you go out of the square, once upon a time *was* somebody, but now he's grown old. Pymæthis, blessed be his soul, used to be his chum.

K. It is neither of the men you mention, Metro ; but the fellow, whether he comes from Chios or Erythræ, is bald and short—well, you would swear he was the very self of Praxinos, as like as one fig to another, except he talked, and then you'd know that he was Cerdo and not Praxinos. He works at his own house and sells on the sly, for every door quakes at the sight of the toll-gatherer now ; but the things he makes, they're like Athene's handiwork ; you'd think them hers, not Cerdo's, if you saw them. A cobbler more kindly disposed toward the female sex you could not find if you went a-hunting for one.

M. Why did you let the other slip then ?

K. My dear Metro ! What did I not do to get it ! How I wheedled, kissing him, stroking his bald head, pouring out sweet wine for him to drink, coaxing and fondling, doing everything but give him myself.

M. Well, but if he'd asked even that, you ought to have given it.

K. I ought, but it is not right to be unseasonable ; for while we were together so, in came the slave of Bitas. The woman has made our mill mere dust and cinders, grinding it day and night, to save wearing out her own for fourpence.

M. How did the cobbler find the way to you, dear Koritto ; don't conceal this from me ?

K. Artemis, the daughter of tanner Candas, sent him, pointing out my house.

M. To be sure, Artemis is always finding something new and cute.

The seventh mime describes a visit of some ladies to the shoemaker Cerdo's shop. Unfortunately the text is too corrupt

to admit of translation. The eighth is even more damaged by time and injury ; it is called "The Dream," but nothing serviceable for literary purpose can be made out of its dilapidated fabric. There are, in addition, a few scattered fragments, one of which shows that Herondas held the same opinion as Mimmermus about the proper climax to mortal life.

*The Visit to  
the Shoe-  
maker,  
The Dream,  
Fragments.*

"When you have reached your sixtieth year, O Gryllus, Gryllus, die and turn to dust, for the bend of life beyond that age is dark and comfortless, the light of man's vitality has then been blunted."

It will be seen from these translations that Herondas, in his delineation of character, kept very close to nature, and that human nature in ancient Hellas did not materially differ from what we know of it at the present time. The wheedling old woman, with her message of seduction, the voluble and shameless blackguard, the idle ragamuffin, the gossip sightseeing, the ladies with their servants and their scandals, the jealous termagant, the fawning sacristan, the blustering dominie, the scolding mother, are all brought vividly before us. Like every sort of good classical work, the method of presentation is broad and simple, the language pregnant. Few words are wasted on description or on argument. The outline is sharply drawn and deeply indented, so that a permanent impression remains upon the memory. For details regarding the daily life of Greek families—the relations between slaves and masters, the religious customs and feelings of the people—these recently discovered Mimiambi are a mine of information.

*Naturalism  
of these  
characters  
and scenes.*

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE IDYLLISTS

Theocritus—His Life—The Canon of his Poems—The Meaning of the word Idyll—Bucolic Poetry in Greece, Rome, Modern Europe—The Scenery of Theocritus—Relation of Southern Nature to Greek Mythology and Greek Art—Rustic Life and Superstitions—Feeling for Pure Nature in Theocritus—How distinguished from the same feeling in Modern Poets—Galatea—Pharmaceutriæ—Hylas—Greek Chivalry—The Dioscuri—Thalysia—Bion—The Lament for Adonis—Moschus—Europa—Megara—Lament for Bion—The Debts of Modern Poets to the Idyllists.

Theocritus  
of Syracuse.

OF the lives of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus there is very little known, and that little has been often repeated. Theocritus was a Syracusan, the son of Praxagoras and Philinna. Some confusion as to his parentage arose from the fact that in the seventh Idyll Theocritus introduced himself under the artificial name of Simichidas, which led early critics to suppose he had a father called Simichus. It is, however, quite clear that the concurrent testimony of Suidas and of an epigram in the Anthology which distinctly asserts his descent from Praxagoras and Philinna, is to be accepted in preference to all conjectures founded on a *nom de plume*. Theocritus flourished between 283 and 263 B.C., but the dates and circumstances of his birth and death are alike unknown. We may gather inferentially or directly from his poems that he sought the patronage of Ptolemy Philadelphus at Alexandria, and lived for some time among the men of letters at his court.

Indeed Theocritus was the most brilliant ornament of that somewhat artificial period of literature; he above all the Alexandrian poets carried the old genius of Greece into new channels, instead of imitating, annotating, and rehandling ancient masterpieces. The sixth and seventh Idylls prove that Aratus, the astronomer, was a familiar friend of the Syracusan bard; probably the frequent allusions to meteorology and the science of the stars which we trace in the poems of Theocritus, may be referred to this intimacy. From the Idylls again we learn that the poet left Alexandria wearied with court life, and, like Spenser, unwilling

Life at  
Alexandria.

“To lose good nights that might be better spent,  
To waste long days in pensive discontent,  
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,  
To feed on hope, and pine with fear and sorrow.

He seems, however, to have once more made trial of princely favour at the Syracusan court of Hiero, and to have been as much offended with the want of appreciation and good taste as with the illiberality that he found there. Among his friends were numbered Nicias, the physician of Miletus, and his wife Theugenis, to whom he addressed the beautiful little poem called *Ἡλακῦτη*, or the Distaff—a charming specimen of what the Greek muse could produce by way of *vers de société*. The end of his life is buried in obscurity. We can easily believe that he spent it quietly among the hills and fields of Sicily, in close communion with the nature that he loved so well. His ill-success as a court poet does not astonish us; the panegyrics of Hiero and Ptolemy are among his worst poems—mere pinchbeck when compared with the pure gold of the Idylls proper. It was in scenes of natural beauty that he felt at home, and when he died he left a volume of immortal verse, each line of which proclaims of him—“Et ego in Arcadiâ.” We cannot give him a more fitting epitaph than that of his own Daphnis:—

ἔβα ρόον · ἐκλίσε δίνα  
τὸν Μῶσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ.<sup>1</sup>

Lives of  
Bion and  
Moschus.

If we know little of Theocritus, less is known of Bion. Suidas says that he was born at Smyrna, and the elegy written on his death leads us to suppose that he lived in Sicily, and died of poison wilfully administered by enemies. Theocritus, though his senior in age and his predecessor in Bucolic poetry, seems to have survived him. Bion's elegist, from whom the few facts which we have related with regard to the poet of Smyrna's life and untimely death are gathered, has generally been identified with Moschus. Ahrens, however, with characteristic German scepticism, places the *Ἐπιτάφιος Βίωνος* (elegy for Bion) upon a list of uncertain Idylls. Nor can it be denied that the author of this poem leads us to believe that he was a native of Magna Græcia, whereas Moschus is known to have been a Syracusan. The third and last of the Sicilian Idyllists, he stands at a great distance from Theocritus in all essential qualities of pastoral composition. He has more of the grammarian or man of erudition about him; and we can readily conceive him to have been, according to the account of Suidas, a friend of Aristarchus. Of the dates of his life nothing can be recorded with any certainty. He seems to have lived about the end of the third century B.C.

Sicily and  
Hiero of  
Syracuse.

During the short period in which Bucolic poetry flourished under Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, Syracuse remained beneath the sceptre of Hiero. While the bloody strife was being waged between Rome and Carthage for the empire of the Mediterranean, Syracuse, intermediate between the two great combatants, was able not only to maintain a splendid independence under the sway of her powerful tyrant, but also to afford the Romans signal aid upon the battlefields of Sicily. In Sicily, the sun of Greece still shone with some

<sup>1</sup> "Down the dark stream he went; the eddies drowned  
The Muses' friend, the youth the Nymphs held dear."

of its old radiance on the spots where, before Athens had assumed the intellectual supremacy of Hellas, poetry, philosophy, and all the arts of life had first displayed their splendid springtime. The island in which the April of the Greek spirit had disclosed its earliest flowers now bore the last but not least lovely wreath of autumn. The winter was soon coming. Rome and her Verres were already looking upon Trinacria as their prey; and the Idyllic garland was destined to crown with exotic blossoms the brows of Virgil.

About the genuineness of many of the Idylls grave questions have been raised. It is hard to believe that all the thirty which bear the name of Theocritus were really written by him. The twenty-third and twenty-fifth, for instance, are not in his style; while the nineteenth reminds us more of the Anacreontic elegance of Bion or Moschus than of his peculiarly vigorous workmanship. The twenty-ninth again, though admitted as genuine by Ahrens, might well pass for the work of an earlier Æolic writer. But without some shock to my feelings I cannot entertain the spuriousness of the twenty-first Idyll, which Ahrens places among the productions of some doubtful author. The whole series after the eighteenth have been questioned. These, however, include the Epical compositions of Theocritus, who might well have assumed a different manner when treating of Hercules or the Dioscuri from that in which he sang the loves of Lycidas and Daphnis. That they are inferior to his pastorals is not to be wondered at; for he who blows his own flute with skill may not be therefore strong enough to sound the trumpet of Homer. Ahrens, as observed above, extends his criticism to the lament for Bion, which, I confess, appears to me more full of fire and inventive genius than any other of the poems attributed to Moschus.

Questions of  
genuine-  
ness.

Yet in these matters of minute evidence too much depends upon mere conjecture and comparison of styles for us to remove old landmarks with certainty. Suppose all records of

Criticism  
by internal  
evidence of  
style.

Raphael's works had been lost, and a few fragments of the Cartoons together with the Transfiguration and the little picture of the Sleeping Knight alone remained of all his paintings, would not some Ahrens be inclined to attribute the Sleeping Knight to a weaker if not less graceful artist of the Umbrian School? The *Allegro* and *Penseroso* might by a similar process of disjunctive criticism be severed from the *Paradise Lost*. On the other hand, nothing can be more doubtful than assertions in favour of authenticity. It is almost impossible for a foreigner to perceive minute differences of style in the works of two contemporary poets, and infinitely more difficult for a modern to exercise the same exact discrimination in deciding on the monuments of classic art. Schlegel, in his *History of Dramatic Literature*, asserts that he discovers no internal difference between Massinger and Fletcher. Yet an English student is struck by the most marked divergences of feeling, language, natural gifts, and acquired habits of thought in these two dramatists. Thus the difficulty of such criticism is twofold. If a Syracusan of 200 B.C. could discuss our lucubrations on the text of the Bucolic poets, he would probably in one case express astonishment at our having ascribed two dissimilar Idylls to Theocritus, and in another case explain away our scepticism by enumerating the three or four successive manners of the poet. Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus are the Eponyms of Idyllic poetry. To each belongs a peculiar style. It is quite possible that some Idylls of successful imitators whose names have been lost may have been fathered upon the three most eminent founders of the school.

Nature of  
the Idyll.

The name of the Idyll sufficiently explains its nature. It is a little picture. Rustic or town life, legends of the gods, and passages of personal experience supply the idyllist with subjects. He does not treat them lyrically, following rather the rules of epic and dramatic composition. Generally there is a narrator, and in so far the Idyll is epic; its verse too is the



hexameter. But occasionally the form of dramatic monologue, as in the *Pharmaceutria*, or that of dramatic dialogue, as in the *Adoniazusa*, takes the place of narrative. Bion's lament for Adonis again is a kind of sacred hymn; while the dirge on Bion's death is elegiac. Two Idylls of Theocritus are encomiastic; several celebrate the deeds of ancestral Doric heroes—Heracles and the Dioscuri. One is an epistle. Many of Bion's so-called Idylls differ little, except in metre, from the Anacreontics, while one at least of the most highly finished pieces of Theocritus must be ranked with erotic poetry of the purely lyrical order. It will be seen from these instances that the idyllic genus admitted many species, and that the Idyllists were far from being simply pastoral poets. This form of composition was in fact the growth of a late age of Greek art, when the great provinces had been explored and occupied, and when the inventor of a new style could legitimately adopt the tone and manner of his various predecessors. Perhaps the plastic arts determined the direction of Idyllic poetry, suggesting the name and supplying the poet with models of compact and picturesque treatment. In reading the Idylls it should never be forgotten that they are pictures, so studied and designed by their authors. They ought to affect us in the same way as the bas-reliefs and vases of Greek art, in which dramatic action is presented at one moment of its evolution, and beautiful forms are grouped together with such simplicity as to need but little story to enhance their value. If we approach the Idylls from this point of view, and regard them as very highly finished works of decorative art, we shall probably be able to enjoy their loveliness without complaining that the shepherds and shepherdesses are too refined, or that the landscapes have not been drawn from nature.

Relation of  
the Idyll to  
plastic art.

Without discussing the whole hackneyed question of Bucolic poetry, a word must be said about its origin, and about the essential difference between Theocritus and modern pastorals. It is natural to suppose that country folk, from the

Pastoral  
poetry.

remotest period of Greek history, refreshed themselves with dance and song, and that music formed a part of their religious ceremonials. The trials of strength which supply the  *motive*  of so many Theocritean Idylls were quite consistent with the manners of the Greeks, who brought all rival claims of superiority to the touchstone of such contests. Their antiquity in the matter of music may be gathered from the legends of Pan and Apollo, and of Apollo and Marsyas. Phoebus, in the character of shepherd to Admetus, gave divine sanction to Bucolic minstrelsy. In respect of bodily strength, the gymnastic rivalry of Olympia and other great Hellenic centres was so important as to determine the chronology of Greece,—while even claims to personal beauty were decided by the same trial: the three goddesses submitted to the arbitration of Paris; and in many states contests for superiority in physical charms were held at certain festivals, not to mention the boys' prize for kisses at Nisæan Megara. Bucolic poetry may therefore be referred to the pastoral custom of shepherds singing together and against each other at festivals or on the green.

The  
peasants of  
Theocritus.

It was the genius of Theocritus in all probability which determined the Doric and Sicilian character of the Idylls we possess. He, a Syracusan and a Dorian, perfected the  *genre* , and was followed by his imitators. Nothing can be more simple and lifelike than the conversations of his rustics, or more nicely discriminated than the pedestrian style of their dialogue and the more polished manner of their studied songs. The poet has no doubt invested these rural encounters with the imaginative beauty which belongs to art. He has attributed to Corydon and Thyrsis much of his own imagination and delicate taste and exquisite sense of natural loveliness. Had he refrained from doing so, his Idylls would not have challenged the attention and won the admiration of posterity. As it is, we find enough of rustic grossness on his pages, and may even complain that his cowherds and goatherds savour

too strongly of their stables. Of his appreciation of scenery it is difficult to speak in terms of excessive praise. As I purpose to discuss this subject more minutely further on, it may here be enough to remark that he alone of pastoral poets drew straight from nature, and fully felt the charm which underlies the facts of rustic life.

In comparison with Theocritus, Bion and Moschus are affected and insipid. Their pastorals smack of the study more than of the fields. Virgil not only lacks his vigour and enthusiasm for the open-air life of the country, but, with Roman bad taste, he commits the capital crime of allegorising. Virgil's pernicious example infected Spenser, Milton, and a host of inferior imitators, flooding literature with dreary pastorals in which shepherds discussed politics, religion, and court-gossip, so that at last Bucolic poetry became a synonym for everything affected and insipid. Poetry flourishes in cities, where rustic song must always be an exotic plant. To analyse Poliziano, Sannazzaro, Guarini, Tasso, Spenser, Fletcher, Jonson, Barnfield, Browne, Pope, etc., and to show what strains of natural elegance adorn their imitations of the ancients, would be a very interesting but lengthy task. As society became more artificial, especially at Florence, Paris, and Versailles, the taste for pseudo-pastorals increased. Court-ladies tucked up their petticoats and carried crooks with ribbons at their tops, while court-poets furnished aristocratic Corydons with smooth verses about pipes and pine-trees, and lambs and wattled cotes. The whole was a dream and a delusion; but this mirage of rusticity appropriated the *name* of pastoral, and reflected discredit even on the great and natural Theocritus. At length this *genre* of composition, in which neither invention nor observation nor truth nor excellence of any kind except inglorious modulation of old themes was needed, died a natural death; and the true Bucolic genius found fresh channels. Crabbe revived an interest in village life; Burns sang immortal lyrics at the plough; Goethe

History of  
pastoral  
poetry.

achieved a masterpiece of Idyllic delineation; Wordsworth reasserted the claims of natural simplicity; Keats expressed the sensuous charms of rustic loveliness; Tennyson and Barnes have written rural idylls in the dialects of Lincolnshire and Dorsetshire; while other writers are pursuing similar lines of composition. Theocritus, it is true, differs widely from these poets both in his style and matter. But he deserves to rank among the most realistic artists of the nineteenth century on account of his simplicity and perfect truth to nature. In reading him we must divest ourselves of any prejudices which we have acquired from the perusal of his tasteless imitators. We must take his volume with us to the scenes in which he lived, and give him a fair trial on his own merits.

The shores  
of the Medi-  
terranean.

It is on the shores of the Mediterranean—at Sorrento, at Amalfi, or near Palermo, or among the valleys of Mentone,—that we ought to study Theocritus, and learn the secret of his charm.<sup>1</sup> Few of us pass middle life without visiting one or other of these sacred spots, which seem to be the garden of perpetual spring. Like the lines of the Sicilian idyllist, they inspire an inevitable and indescribable *πόθος* (yearning desire, *Sehnsucht*), touching our sense of beauty with a subtle power, and soothing our spirits with the majesty of classical repose. Straight from the sea-beach rise mountains of distinguished form, not capped with snow or clothed with pines, but carved of naked rock. We must accept their beauty as it is, nude, well defined, and unadorned, nor look in vain for the mystery or sublimity or picturesqueness of the Alps. Light and colour are the glory of these mountains. Valleys divide their flanks, seaming with shadow-belts and bands of green the broad hill-side, while lower down the olives spread a hoary greyness and soft robe of silver mist, the skirts of which are kissed by tideless waves. The harmony between the beauty of the olive boughs and the blue sea can be better felt than described.

<sup>1</sup> I may refer my readers to the chapter on the Cornice in my *Sketches in Italy and Greece* for a fuller treatment of this landscape.

Guido Reni, whose subtlety of sentiment was very rare, has expressed it in one or two of his earliest and best pictures by graduated tones of silver, azure, and cool gray. The definite form and sunny brightness of the olive-tree suits our conception of the Greek character. It may well have been the favourite plant of the wise and calm Athené. Oaks with their umbrageous foliage, pine-trees dark and mournful upon Alpine slopes, branching limes, and elms in which the wind sways shadowy masses of thick leaves, belong, with their huge girth and gnarled boles and sombre roofage, to the forests of the North, where nature is rather an awful mother than a kind foster-nurse and friend of man. In northern landscapes the eye travels through vistas of leafy boughs to still secluded crofts and pastures, where slow-moving oxen graze. The mystery of dreams and the repose of meditation haunt our massive bowers. But in the South, the lattice-work of olive boughs and foliage scarcely veils the laughing sea and bright blue sky, while the hues of the landscape find their climax in the dazzling radiance of the sun upon the waves, and the pure light of the horizon. There is no concealment and no melancholy here. Nature seems to hold a never-ending festival and dance, in which the waves and sunbeams and shadows join. Again, in northern scenery, the rounded forms of full-foliaged trees suit the undulating country, with its gentle hills and brooding clouds; but in the South the spiky leaves and sharp branches of the olive carry out the defined outlines which are everywhere observable through the broader beauties of mountain and valley and sea-shore. Serenity and intelligence characterise this southern landscape, in which a race of splendid men and women lived beneath the pure light of Phæbus, their ancestral god. Pallas protected them, and golden Aphrodité favoured them with beauty. Nations as great and noble have arisen among the oak and beech woods of the North; strong-sinewed warriors, heroic women, counsellors with mighty brains, and poets on whose tongue the

melody of music lingers like a charm. But the Greeks alone owned the gift of innate beauty and unerring taste. The human form upon those bare and sunny hills, beneath those twinkling olive boughs, beside that sea of everlasting laughter, reached its freedom; and the spirit of human loveliness was there breathed fully into all the forms of art. Poetry, sculpture, architecture, music, dancing, all became the language of that moderate and lucid harmony which we discover in the landscape of the Greeks.

The stone-  
pine.

Olives are not, however, by any means the only trees which play a part in idyllic scenery. The tall stone-pine is even more important; for underneath its shade the shepherds loved to sing, hearing the murmur in its spreading roof, and waiting for the cones with their sweet fruit to fall. Near Massa, by Sorrento, there are two gigantic pines so placed that, lying on the grass beneath them, one looks on Capri rising from the sea, Baiæ, and all the bay of Naples sweeping round to the base of Vesuvius. Tangled growths of olives, oranges, and rose-trees fill the garden-ground along the shore, while far away in the distance pale Inarimë sleeps, with her exquisite Greek name, a virgin island on the deep. In such a place we realise Theocritean melodies, and find a new and indestructible loveliness in the opening line of his first idyll:—

*ἀδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἡ πίτις, αἰπόλε, τήνα.*

“Sweet is the whisper above in the boughs, and sweet is the pine-tree.”

These pines are few and far between. Growing alone or in pairs, they stand like monuments upon the hills, their black forms sculptured on the cloudlike olive groves, from which at intervals spring spires and columns of slender cypress-trees.

Here and there in this bright garden of the age of gold white villages are seen, and solitary cottage roofs high up

among the hills,—dwellings perhaps of Amaryllis, whom the shepherds used to serenade. Huge fig-trees lean their weight of leaves and purple fruit upon the cottage walls, while cherry-trees and apricots snow the grass in spring with a white wealth of April blossoms. The stone walls and little wells in the cottage gardens are green with immemorial moss and ferns, and fragrant with gadding violets that ripple down their sides, and chequer them with blue. On the wilder hills you find patches of ilex and arbutus glowing with crimson berries and white waxen bells, sweet myrtle rods and shafts of bay, frail tamarisk and tall tree-heaths that wave their frosted boughs above your head. Nearer the shore, the lentisk grows, a savoury shrub, with cytissus and aromatic rosemary. Clematis and polished garlands of tough sarsaparilla wed the shrubs with clinging climbing arms; and here and there in sheltered nooks the vine shoots forth luxuriant tendrils bowed with grapes stretching from branch to branch of mulberry or elm, flinging festoons on which young loves might sit and swing, or weaving a lattice-work of leaves across the open shed. Nor must the sounds of this landscape be forgotten,—sounds of bleating flocks, and murmuring bees, and nightingales, and doves that moan, and running streams, and shrill cicadas, and hoarse frogs, and whispering pines. There is not a single detail which a patient student may not verify from Theocritus.

Details of  
southern  
landscape.

Then too it is a landscape in which sea and country are never sundered. This must not be forgotten of Idyllic scenery; for it was the warm sea-board of Sicily, beneath projecting heights of Ætna, that gave birth to the Bucolic muse. The intermingling of pastoral and sea life is exquisitely allegorised in the legend of Galatea; and on the cup which Theocritus describes in his first Idyll, the fisherman plays an equal part with the shepherd youths and the boy who watches by the vineyard wall. The higher we climb upon the mountain-side the more marvellous is the beauty of the sea, which seems to rise as we ascend, and stretch into the sky. Sometimes a little

Sea and  
country.

flake of blue is framed by olive boughs, sometimes a turning in the road reveals the whole broad azure calm below. Or after toiling up a steep ascent we fall upon the undergrowth of juniper, and lo a double sea, this way and that, divided by the sharp spine of the jutting hill, jewelled with villages along its shore, and smiling with fair islands and silver sails. Upon the beach the waves come tumbling in, swaying the corallines and green and purple sea-weeds in the pools. Ceaseless beating of the spray has worn the rocks into jagged honeycombs on which lazy fishermen sit perched, dangling their rods like figures in Pompeian frescoes.

Greek legends and southern nature.

In landscapes such as these we are readily able to understand the legends of rustic gods; the metamorphoses of Syrinx, Narcissus, Echo, Hyacinthus, and Adonis; the tales of slumbering Pan, and horned satyrs, and peeping fauns, with which the Idyllists have adorned their simple shepherd songs. Here, too, the oread dwellers of the hills, and dryads, and sylvans, and water-nymphs, seem possible. They lose their unreality and mythic haziness; for men themselves are more a part of nature here than in the North, more fit for companionship with deities of stream and hill. Their labours are lighter and their food more plentiful. Summer leaves them not, and the soil yields fair and graceful crops. There is surely some difference between hoeing turnips and trimming olive boughs; between tending turkeys on a Norfolk common and leading goats to browse on cytisus beside the shore; between the fat pasturage and bleak winters of our midland counties and the spare herbage of the South dried by perpetual sunlight. It cannot be denied that men assimilate something from their daily labour, and that the poetry of rustic life is more evident upon Mediterranean shores than in England.

Nor must the men and women of classical landscape be forgotten. When we read the Idylls of Theocritus, and wish to see before us Thestylis, and Daphnis, and Lycidas, we have but to recall the perfect forms of Greek sculpture. We



may for instance summon to our mind the Endymion of the Capitol, nodding in eternal slumber, with his sheep-dog slumbering by : or Artemis stepping from her car ; her dragons coil themselves between the shafts and fold their plumeless wings : or else Hippolytus and Meleager booted for the boar-chase : or Bacchus finding Ariadne by the sea-shore ; mænads and satyrs are arrested in their dance ; flower-garlands fall upon the path : or a goat-legged satyr teaches a young faun to play ; the pipe and flute are there, and from the boy's head fall long curls upon his neck. Or Europa drops anemone and crocus from her hand, trembling upon the bull as he swims onward through the sea : or tritons blow wreathed shells, and dolphins splash the water : or the eagle's claws clasp Ganymede, and bear him up to Zeus : or Adonis lies wounded, and wild Aphrodité spreads hungry arms, and wails with rent robes tossed above her head. From the cabinet of gems we draw a Love, blind, bound, and stung by bees ; or a girl holding an apple in her hand ; or a young man tying on his sandal. Then there is the Praxitelean genius of the Vatican, who might be Hylas, or Uranian Erôs, or Hymenæus, or curled Hyacinthus—the Faun who lies at Munich overcome with wine, his throat bare, and his deep chest heaving with the breath of sleep—Hercules strangling the twin snakes in his cradle, or ponderous with knotty sinews and huge girth of neck—Demeter, holding fruits of all sorts in one hand and corn stalks in the other, sweeping her full raiment on the granary floor. Or else we bring again the pugilists from Caracalla's bath,—bruised faces and ears livid with unheeded blows,—their strained arms bound with thongs, and clamps of iron on their fists. Processions move in endless line, of godlike youths on prancing steeds, of women bearing baskets full of cakes and flowers, of oxen lowing to the sacrifice. The Trojan heroes fall with smiles upon their lips ; the athlete draws the strigil down his arm ; the sons of Niobe lie stricken, beautiful in death. Cups too and vases help us, chased with figures of all kinds,—dance,

Greek  
sculpture  
and Greek  
poetry.

festival, love-making, rustic sacrifice, the legendary tales of hate and woe, the daily idylls of domestic life.

Modern  
painting.

Such are some of the works of Greek art which we may use in our attempt to realise Theocritus. Nor need we neglect the monuments of modern painting—Giorgione's pastoral pictures of piping men and maidens crowned with jasmine flowers, Raphael's Triumph of Galatea, and Tintoretto's Marriage of Ariadne, or the Arcadians of Poussin reading the doom of death upon the gravestone, and its epitaph—"Et ego."

Permanence  
of rustic  
manners.

To reconstruct the mode of life of the Theocritean *dramatis personæ* is not a matter of much difficulty. Pastoral habits are singularly unchangeable, and nothing strikes us more than the recurrence of familiar rustic proverbs, superstitions, and ways of thinking which we find in the Idyllic poets. The mixture of simplicity and shrewdness, of prosaic interest in worldly affairs and of an unconscious admiration for the poetry of nature, which George Sand has recently assigned with delicate analysis to the Bucolic character in her Idylls of Nohant, meets us in every line of the Sicilian pastorals. On the Mediterranean shores too the same occupations have been carried on for centuries with little interruption. The same fields are being ploughed, the same vineyards tilled, the same olive-gardens planted, as those in which Theocritus played as a child. The rocks on which he saw old Olpis watching for the tunnies, with fishing-reed and rush basket, are still haunted through sunny hours by patient fishermen. Perhaps they cut their reeds and rushes in the same river-beds; certainly they use the same *arundo donax*. The goats have not forgotten to crop cytissus and myrtle, nor have the goatherds changed their shaggy trousers and long crooks. You may still pick out a shepherd lad among a hundred by his skin and cloak. It is even said that the country ditties of the Neapolitans are Greek; and how ancient is the origin of local superstitions, who shall say? The country folk still prefer, like Comatas in the fifth Idyll, garden-grown roses to the

wild eglantine and anemones of the hedgerow, scorning what has not required some cost or trouble for its cultivation. Rural  
supersti-  
tions. Gretchen's test of love by blowing on thistle-down does not differ much from that of the shepherd in the third Idyll. Live blood in the eye is still a sign of mysterious importance (*Idyll* iii. 36). To spit is still a remedy against the evil eye (vii. 39). Eunice, the town girl, still turns up her nose at the awkward cowherd; city and country are not yet wholly harmonised by improved means of locomotion. Then the people of the South are perfectly unchanged—the fisher boys of Castellammare; the tall straight girls of Capri singing as they walk with pitchers on their heads and distaffs in their hands; the wild Apulian shepherds; the men and maidens laughing in the olive-fields or vineyards; the black-browed beauties of the Cornice trooping to church on Sundays with gold earrings, and with pink tulip-buds in their dark hair. One thing, however, is greatly altered. Go where we will, we find no statues of Priapus and the Nymphs. No lambs are sacrificed to Pan. No honey or milk is poured upon the altars of the rustic Muse. The temples are in ruins. Aloes and cactuses have invaded the colonnades of Girgenti, and through the halls of Pæstum winds whistle, and sunbeams stream unheeded. But though the gods are gone, men remain unaltered. A little less careless, a little more superstitious they may be; but their joys and sorrows, their vices and virtues, their loves and hates, are still the same.

Such reflections sound trite and commonplace. Yet who can resist the force of their truth and pathos?

οὐχ ἄμιν τὸν Ἐρωτα μόνοις ἔτεχ', ὡς ἔδοκεῦμες,  
Νικία, φτίνει τοῦτο θεῶν ποκα τέκνον ἔγεντο·  
οὐχ ἄμιν τὰ καλὰ πρῶτοις καλὰ φαίνεται ἡμεν,  
οἱ θνατοὶ πελόμεσθα, τὸ δ' αὔριον οὐκ ἔσορῶμες<sup>1</sup> —

<sup>1</sup> "Not for us alone, as we once thought, friend Nicias, did Love's parent, whosoever among gods that was, beget Lord Erōs. Not for us did fair things first reveal their fairness; we who are mortal men, and have no vision of the morrow."

Freshness of  
this poetry.

so sang Theocritus, looking back into the far past, and remembering that the gifts of love and beauty have belonged to men and gods from everlasting. With what redoubled force may we, after the lapse of twenty centuries, echo these words, when we tread the ground he knew, and read the songs he sang! His hills stir our vague and yearning admiration; his sea laughs its old laugh of waywardness and glee; his flowers bloom yearly, and fade in the spring; his pine and olive branches overshadow us; we listen to the bleating of his goats, and taste the sweetness of the springs from which he drank; the milk and honey are as fresh upon our lips, the wine in winter by the wood-fire, when the winds are loud, is just as fragrant; youth is still youth, nor have the dark-eyed maidens lost their charm. Truly "not for us did fair things first reveal their fairness." In this consists the power of Theocritean poetry. It strikes a note which echoes through our hearts by reason of its genuine simplicity and pathos. The thoughts which natural beauty stirs in our minds, find their embodiment in his sweet strong verse; and though since his time the world has grown old, though the gods of Greece have rent their veils and fled with shrieks from their sanctuaries, though in spite of ourselves we turn our faces skyward from the earth, though emaciated saints and martyrs have supplanted Adonis and the Graces, though the cold damp shades of Calvinism have chilled our marrow and our blood; yet there remain deep down within our souls some primal sympathies with nature, some instincts of the Faun, or Satyr, or Sylvan, which education has not quite eradicated. "The hand which hath long time held a violet doth not soon forego her perfume, nor the cup from which sweet wine hath flowed his fragrance."

I have dwelt long upon the peculiar properties of classical landscape as described by the Greek Idyllists, and as they still exist for travellers upon the more sheltered shores of the Mediterranean, because it is necessary to understand them

before we can appreciate the *truth* of Theocritus. Of late years much has been written about the difference between classical and modern ways of regarding landscape. Mr. Ruskin has tried to persuade us that the ancients only cared for the more cultivated parts of nature, for gardens or orchards, from which food or profit or luxurious pleasure might be derived. And in this view there is no doubt some truth. The Greeks and Romans paid less attention to inanimate nature than we do, and were beyond all question repelled by the savage grandeur of marine and mountain scenery, preferring landscapes of smiling and cultivated beauty to rugged sublimity or the picturesqueness of decay. In this they resembled all southern nations. An Italian of the present day avoids ruinous places and solitudes however splendid. Among the mountains he complains of the *brutto paese* (ugly place) in which he has to live, and is always longing for town gaieties and the amenities of civilised society.<sup>1</sup> The ancients again despised all interests that pretended to rival the paramount interest of civic or military life. Seneca's figurative expression *circum flosculos occupari* (to be occupied with flowerets, prettinesses of rhetoric) might be translated literally as applied to a trifle, to denote the scorn which thinkers, statesmen, patriots, and generals of Greece and Rome felt for mere rural prettiness; while Quintilian's verdict on Theocritus (whom, however, he allows to be "admirable in his own line"), *musa illa rustica et pastoralis non forum modo verum ipsam etiam urbem reformidat* (that rural and pastoral Muse has a horror not only of the forum, but also of the very city itself), characterises the insensibility of urban intellects to a branch of art which we consider

Truth to  
nature.

<sup>1</sup> One bright morning in the first week of June I went out into the fields at Borea below Macugnaga, which were then full of brilliant and sweet flowers. There I met an old woman, with whom I talked about her life in what seemed to me a terrestrial Paradise. She threw her arms and eyes to heaven, and looking round her, cried, "*Che brutto paese!*" "Ah, what an ugly country to live in!" Compare Browning's *Up at a Villa, Down in the City*.

Classical  
and modern  
views of  
nature.

of high importance. But it is very easy to overstrain this view, and students, perhaps, have laid an undue stress on Homer in their criticism of the classics ; whereas it is among the later Greek and Roman poets that the analogy of modern literature would lead us to expect indications of a genuine taste for unadorned nature. These signs the Idyllic poets amply supply ; but in seeking for them we must be prepared to recognise a different mode of expression from that which we are trained to by the florid poets of the modern age. Conciseness, simplicity, and an almost prosaic accuracy are the never-failing attributes of classical descriptive art. Moreover, humanity was always more present to their minds than to ours. Nothing evoked sympathy from a Greek unless it appeared before him in a human shape, or in connection with some human sentiment. The ancient poets do not describe inanimate nature as such, or attribute a vague spirituality to fields and clouds. That feeling for the beauty of the world which is embodied in such poems as Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* gave birth in their imagination to definite legends, involving some dramatic interest and conflict of passions. We who are apt to look for rhapsodies and brilliant outpourings of eloquent fancy, can scarcely bring ourselves to recollect what a delicate sense of nature and what profound emotions are implied in the conceptions of Pan and Hyacinthus and Galatea. The misuse which has been made of mythology by modern writers has effaced half its vigour and charm. It is only by returning to the nature which inspired these myths that we can reconstruct their exquisite vitality. Different ages and nations express themselves by different forms of art. Music appears to be dominant in the present period ; sculpture ruled among the Greeks, and struck the keynote for all other arts. Even those sentiments which in our mind are most vague, the admiration of sunset skies, or flowers or copsewoods in spring, were expressed by them in the language of definite human form. They sought to externalise and realise as far as

Music and  
sculpture.

possible, not to communicate the inmost feelings and spiritual suggestions arising out of natural objects. Never advancing beyond corporeal conditions, they confined themselves to form, and sacrificed the charm of mystery, which is incompatible with very definite conception. It was on this account that sculpture, the most exactly imitative of the arts, became literally architectonic among the Greeks. And for a precisely similar reason music, which is the most abstract and subjective of the arts, the most evanescent in its material, and the vaguest, assumes the chief rank among modern arts. Sculpture is the poetry of the body, music the language of the soul.

Having once admitted their peculiar *môde* of feeling Nature, Greek feeling for landscape. no one can deny that landscape occupies an important place in Greek literature. Every line of Theocritus is vital with a strong passion for natural beauty, incarnated in myths. But even in descriptive poetry he is not deficient. His list of trees and flowers is long, and the epithets with which they are characterised are very exquisite,—not indeed brilliant with the inbreathed fancy of the North, but so perfectly appropriate as to define the special beauty of the flower or tree selected. In the same way, a whole scene is conveyed in a few words by mere conciseness of delineation, or by the artful introduction of some incident suggesting human emotion. Take for example this picture of the stillness of the night:—

ἡνίδε σιγῇ μὲν πόντος, σιγῶντι δ' ἀῆται·  
 ἃ δ' ἐμὰ οὐ σιγῇ στέρνων ἔντοσθεν ἀνία,  
 ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τήνῃ πᾶσα καταίθομαι, ὅς με τάλαιναν  
 ἀντὶ γυναικὸς ἔθηκε κακὰν καὶ ἀπάρθενον ἡμεν.<sup>1</sup>

*Idyll ii. 38-41.*

<sup>1</sup> "Hushed is the deep broad sea, and hushed are the winds of the heavens ;

But never hushed in my heart is love's ache e'en for an instant :

Nay, I am all on fire for him, for the lover who left me,

Ah, poor me ! not a wife, but an outcast, reft of my maidhood.

Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling."

Or this :—

ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν χαίρουσα ποτ' ὠκεανὸν τρέπε πώλους,  
 πότνι', ἐγὼ δ' οἰσῶ τὸν ἐμὸν πόνον, ὥσπερ ὑπέσταν.  
 χαῖρε, Σελαναία λιπαρόχροε· χαίρετε δ', ἄλλοι  
 ἀστέρες, εὐκήλοιο κατ' ἀντὺγα Νυκτὸς ὀπαδοί<sup>1</sup>

*Idyll ii. 163-166.*

Or this of a falling star :—

κατήριπε δ' ἐς μέλαν ὕδωρ  
 ἀθρόος, ὡς ὅκα πυρσὸς ἀπ' οὐρανῷ ἤριπεν ἀστὴρ  
 ἀθρόος ἐν πόντῳ, ναύταις δέ τις εἶπεν ἑταίροις·  
 κουφότερ', ὦ παῖδες, ποιεύσθ' ὄπλα· πλευστικὸς οὖρος.<sup>2</sup>

*Idyll xiii. 49-52.*

Simplicity  
 and defini-  
 tion.

Or the seaweeds on a rocky shore (vii. 58), or the summer bee (iii. 15), or the country party at harvest time (vii. 129 to the end). In all of these a peculiar simplicity will be noticed, a self-restraint and scrupulosity of definite delineation. To Theocritus the shadowy and iridescent fancies of modern poetry would have been unintelligible. The creations of a Keats or Shelley would have appeared as monstrous births, like the Centaurs of Ixion, begotten by lawless imaginations upon cloud and mist. When the Greek poet wished to express the charm of summer waves he spoke of Galatea, more fickle and light than thistle-down, a maiden careless of her lover and as cruel as the sea. The same waves suggested to Shakespeare these lines, from *Midsummer Night's Dream* :—

“Thou rememberest

Since once I sat upon a promontory,

<sup>1</sup> “Nay, turn thou thy steeds in the joy of thy soul to the ocean,  
 Lady revered ! my pain I will bear, as I vowed to endure it.  
 Farewell, Queen of the heavens, in the sheen of thy splendour, and  
 farewell

All ye lesser stars that follow the wheels of the still Night.”

<sup>2</sup> “Into the black wave

Fell headlong as a fiery star from heaven  
 Falls headlong to the deep, and sailors cry  
 One to another, Lighten sail ; behold,  
 The breeze behind us freshens !”



And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back  
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath  
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,  
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,  
To hear the sea-maid's music ;"

and to Weber the ethereal "mermaid's song" in *Oberon*. No one acquainted with Shakespeare and Weber can deny that both have expressed with marvellous subtlety the magic of the sea in its enchanting calm, whereas the Greek poet works only by indirect suggestion, and presents us with a human portrait more than a phantom of the glamour of the deep. What we have lost in definite projection we have gained in truth, variety, and freedom. The language of our art appeals immediately to the emotions, disclosing the spiritual reality of things, and caring less for their form than for the feelings they excite in us. Greek art remains upon the surface, and translates into marble the humanised aspects of the external world. The one is for ever seeking to set free, the other to imprison thought. The Greek tells with exquisite precision what he has observed, investing it perhaps with his own emotion. He says, for instance :—

The Greeks  
compared  
with modern  
artists.

αἶθε γενοίμαν  
ἀ βομβεῖσα μέλυσσα, καὶ ἐς τεὸν ἄντρον ἰκοίμαν,  
τὸν κυσὸν διαδὶς καὶ τὴν πτέριν, ἧ τὸν πυκάσδῃ.<sup>1</sup>

The modern poet, to use Shelley's words,

"Will watch from dawn to gloom  
The lake-reflected sun illumine  
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom ;  
Nor heed nor see what shapes they be,  
But from these create he can  
Forms more real than living man,  
Nurslings of immortality,"

---

<sup>1</sup> "Would I were

The murmuring bee, that through the ivy screen  
And through the fern that hides thee, I might come  
Into thy cavern !"

Greek myths  
of metamor-  
phosis.

endeavouring to look through and beyond the objects of the outer world, to use them as the starting-points for his creative fancy, and to embroider their materials with the dazzling *fioriture* of his invention. Metamorphosis existed for the Greek poet as a simple fact. If the blood of Adonis turned to anemones, yet the actual drops of blood and the flowers remained distinct in the poet's mind; and even though he may have been sceptical about the miracle, he restrained his fancy to the reproduction of the one old fable. The modern poet believes in no metamorphosis but that which is produced by the alchemy of his own brain. He loves to confound the most dissimilar existences, and to form startling combinations of thoughts which have never before been brought into connection with each other. Uncontrolled by tradition or canons of propriety, he roams through the world, touching its various objects with the wand of his imagination. To the West Wind he cries:—

“Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,  
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,  
Angels of rain and lightning; there are spread  
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,  
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head  
Of some fierce Mænad, ev'n from the dim verge  
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,  
The locks of the approaching storm. . . .”

Imagine how astonished even Æschylus would have been at these violent transitions and audacious transformations! The Greeks had few conceits:<sup>1</sup> they did not call the waves

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this is overstated. In the later Greek literature of the Sophists we find many very exquisite *conceits*. Philostratus, for example, from whom Jonson translated “Drink to me only with thine eyes,” calls the feet of the beloved one *ἐρηρυσμένα φιλήματα*, or “kisses pressed upon the ground.” Even Empedocles (see vol. i. p. 203) and Pindar (see vol. i. p. 350) are not free from the vice of artificial metaphor. Compare, too, the laboured metaphors and compound epithets quoted from Chærémon (page 122, above), and the specimens quoted in chapter xxii. from Meleager.

"noddling hearse-plumes" like Calderon, or the birds "winged lyres" like Marini, or daisies "pearled Arcturi of the earth" like Shelley, or laburnums "dropping wells of fire" like Tennyson. If they ventured on such licenses in their more impassioned lyrics, they maintained the metaphor with strict propriety. One good instance of the difference in this respect between the two ages is afforded by Ben Jonson, who translates Sappho's

Absence of  
conceits.

ἦρος ἰμερόφωνος ἄγγελος ἀηδών,

by "the dear good angel of the spring, the nightingale." Between ἄγγελος and *angel* there is the distance of nearly twenty centuries; for though Ben Jonson may have meant merely to anglicise the Greek word, he could not but have been glad of the more modern meaning.

So much of this chapter has already been devoted to the consideration of Theocritean poetry in general, that I cannot here afford to enter into the details of his several Idylls. A few, however, may be noticed, of peculiar beauty and significance. None are more true to local scenery than those which relate to the story of Galatea. In this brief tale, the life of the mountains and the rivers and the sea is symbolised,—the uncouth and gigantic hills, rude in their rusticity—the clear and lovable stream—the merry sea, inconstant and treacherous, with shifting waves. The mountain stands for ever unremoved; love as he will, he can but gaze upon the dancing sea, and woo it with gifts of hanging trees, and cool shadowy caverns, and still sleeping-places in sheltered bays. But the stream leaps down from crag to crag, and gathers strength and falls into the arms of the expectant nymph—a fresh lover, fair and free, and full of smiles. Supposing this marriage of the sea and river to have been the earliest idea of the mythus, in course of time the persons of Acis and Galatea, and the rejected lover Polyphemus, became more and more humanised, until the old symbolism was lost in a pastoral romance. Polyphemus loves, but never wins: he may offer

The legend  
of Galatea.

Polyphemus.

his tall bay-trees and slender cypresses, and black ivy, and sweet-fruited vines, and cold water flowing straight—a drink divine—from the white snows of wooded Ætna: he may sit whole days above the sea, and gaze upon its smiling waves, and tell the nymph of all his flocks and herds, or lure her with promises of flowers and fawns and bear's whelps to leave the sea to beat upon its shore, and come and live with him and feed his sheep. It is of no use. Galatea heeds him not, and Polyphemus has to shepherd his love as best he can. Poetry in this idyll is blended with the simplest country humour. The pathos of Polyphemus is really touching, and his allusions to the sweetness of a shepherd's life among the hills abound in unconscious poetry; side by side with which are placed the most ludicrous expressions of uncouth disappointment, together with trenchant observations on the value of property and other prosaic details. If I mistake not, this is true of the rustic character, in which, though stirred by sorrow into sympathy with nature, habitual caution and shrewdness survive. The meditations of the shepherd in the third Idyll exhibit the same mixture of sentiments.

The second  
Idyll of  
Theocritus.

As a specimen of the Idylls which illustrate town life I select the second, the humour of its rival, the fifteenth, being of that perfect sort which must be read and laughed over, but which cannot well be analysed. The subject of the *Pharmaceutria* is an incantation performed in the stillness of the night by a proud Syracusan lady who has been deserted by her lover.<sup>1</sup> In delineating the fierceness of her passion and

<sup>1</sup> "Twelve long days have passed, and he hath not come to my homestead,  
Doth not know if I died, or am yet in the land of the living,  
Hath not knocked at the door; oh, heartless! Certainly elsewhere  
Love hath wafted his soul feather-winged, and the Queen Aphroditë.  
I on the morrow will go to the wrestling-ground where he haunteth,  
Meet with him face to face, and load him there with reproaches.  
But for the nonce mean I to bind him with runes: and, Selenë,  
Shine thou fair in the heavens; for to thee will I chaunt through the  
silence,  
Calling on Hecätë too, hell's queen, who maketh to tremble

the indomitable resolution of her will Theocritus has produced a truly tragic picture. Simætha, maddened by vehement despair, resorts to magic arts. Love, she says, has sucked her life-blood like a leech, and parched her with the fever of desire. She cannot live without the lover for whose possession she has sacrificed her happiness and honour. If she cannot charm him back again, she will kill him. There are poisons ready to work her will in the last resort. Meanwhile we see her standing at the magic wheel, turning it round before the fire, and charging it to draw false Delphis to her home. A hearth with coals upon it is at hand, on which her maid keeps sprinkling the meal that typifies the bones of Delphis, the wax by which his heart is to be consumed, and the laurel bough that stands for his body. At the least sign of laziness Simætha scolds her with hard and haughty words. She stands like a Medea, seeking no sympathy, sparing no reproaches, tiger-like in her ferocity of thwarted passion.<sup>1</sup> When the magic rites have been per-

Simætha's  
love and  
vengeance.

Even the hounds as she goes through the tombs of the dead and the black blood.

Hail, Hecatë, dread dame ! to the end be thou my assistant,  
Making my medicines work no less than the philtre of Circë,  
Or Medea's charms, or yellow-haired Perimedë's.

Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling."

- <sup>1</sup> "Lo, the barley-grains pine first in the fire ! With a full hand  
Cast on, Thestyli ! Where, fond maid, are thy wandering wits flown ?  
Even to thee, unto thee, am I turned to a scorn and a hissing ?  
Cast on, crying the while, 'tis the bones of Delphis I scatter !"

Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling.

- "Delphis hath hurt me ; and I 'gainst Delphis am burning the laurel :  
Yea, as the singed leaves shrink and crackle, caught by the fierce flame,  
Burst in a sudden flame, die down, and we see not a cinder,  
So likewise may the flesh of Delphis waste in the burning.

Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling.

- "E'en as I melt this wax with the might of the god to assist me,  
So let Myndian Delphis in love's flame speedily languish ;  
And as the brazen orb whirls, so by the Queen Aphroditë  
Spell-bound may he revolve and whirl at the door of my dwelling.

Wheel of the magic spells, draw thou that man to my dwelling."

Invocation  
to the  
Moon.

formed; and Thestylis has gone to smear an ointment on the doors of Delphis, Simætha leaves the wheel and addresses her soliloquy to the Moon, who has just risen, and who is journeying in calm and silver glory through the night. There is something sublime in the contrast between the moonlight on the sea of Syracuse and the fierce agony of the deserted lioness. To the Moon she confides the story of her love: "Take notice of my love, whence it arose, dread Queen." It is a vivid and tragic tale of southern passion: sudden and consuming, recklessly gratified, and followed by desertion on the one side and by vengeance on the other.<sup>1</sup> Simætha has no doubt many living parallels among Sicilian women. The classical reader will find in her narration a description of the working of love hardly to be surpassed by Sappho's Ode, or Plato's *Phædrus*.<sup>2</sup> The wildness of the scene, the magic rites,

<sup>1</sup> How wonderfully beautiful is her description of Delphis and his comrade Eudamnippus: "Their cheeks and chin were yellower than helichrysus; their breasts more radiant far than thou, O Moon, as having lately left the fair toil of the wrestling-ground."

<sup>2</sup> "Scarce had we reached the midpoint of the road by the dwelling of Lycon,

Delphis when I beheld with Eudamnippus advancing:  
Blonder of cheek and chin were the youths than yellowing ivy,  
Yea, and their breasts far brighter of sheen than thou, O Selenë,  
Showing they just had come from the noble toil of the wrestlers.  
Think on my love, and think whence it came, thou Lady Selenë.

"I, when I saw, how I rag'd, how the flame took hold of my bosom,  
Burn'd my love-lost heart! My beauty waned, and no longer  
Watch'd I the pomp as it pass'd; nor how I returned to my home-  
stead

Knew I, for some fell bane, some parching disease had undone me:  
Ten days, stretch'd on my bed, and ten nights dwelt I in anguish.  
Think on my love, and think whence it came, thou Lady Selenë.

"Often the bloom of my flesh grew dry and yellow as dye-wood;  
Yea, and the hairs of my head fell off, and of all that I once was  
Nought but skin was left and bones: and to whom did I not turn,  
Whose roof left I unsought where an old crone chanted a love-charm?

the august presence of the Moon, and the murderous determination of Simætha heighten the dramatic effect, and render the tale excessively interesting.

As a picture of classical sorcery this Idyll is very curious. Nothing can be more erroneous than to imagine that witchcraft is a northern invention of the Middle Ages, or that the Brocken is its headquarters. With the exception of a few inconsiderable circumstances, all the terrible or loathsome rites of magic were known to the ancients, and merely copied by the moderns. Circe in Homer, Simætha in Theocritus, Canidia in Horace, the Libyan sorceress of Virgil, the Saga of Tibullus, Medea in Ovid, Erichtho in Lucan, and Megæra in Claudian (to mention no more), make up a list of formidable witches to whom none of the hideous details of the black art were unknown. They sought for poisonous herbs at night, lived in ruinous places, ransacked charnel-houses for dead bodies, killed little children to obtain their fat for unguents, compelled the spirits of the dead to rise, and after entering a fresh corpse to reveal the mysteries of fate, devoured snakes, drank blood, raised storms at sea, diverted the moon from her course, muttered spells of fearful import, and loved above all things to "raise jars, jealousies, strifes, like a thick scurf o'er life." Even in the minutest details of sorcery they anticipated the witches of the Middle Ages. Hypsipyle in Ovid mentions a waxen portrait stuck full of needles, and so fashioned as to waste the life of its original. The witch in the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius anoints

Sorcery and  
magic in  
ancient  
times.

Still no solace I found, and time sped ever a-flying.

Think on my love, and think whence it came, thou Lady Selenë.

"So at the last to the maid I told the truth, and the whole truth :

'Thestylis, up, and bestir thee, seek out some cure of my heartache !

Soul and body am I in the hands of the Myndian : hie thee,

Watch by the wrestling-ground of Timagetus, the athlete,

For it is there that he haunts, and there he delighteth to linger.'

Think on my love, and think whence it came, thou Lady Selenë.

" 'There, shouldst thou find him alone, draw near and silently beckon.

Say, "Simætha demands thee !" and lead him back to my dwelling.'"

Mediæval  
magic.

herself, and flies about like a bird at night. Nor were were-wolves, those most ghastly creations of diseased imagination, unfamiliar to the Greeks and Romans, as may be proved from Herodotus, Virgil, Ovid, Petronius, and Apuleius. Those who care to pursue this subject will find large stores of learning collected on the point by Ben Jonson in his annotations to *The Masque of Queens*. One fact, however, must be always borne in mind: the ancients regarded witchcraft as either a hideous or a solemn exercise of supernatural power, not recognising any Satanic agency or compact with Hell. *Hecate trivis ululata per urbes* (Hecate, adjured with wailings on the cross-ways through the cities), the "Queen of the Night and of the Tombs," assisted sorcerers: but this meant merely that they trafficked in the dark with the foul mysteries of death and corruption. The classical witches were either grave and awful women, like the Libyan priestess in the *Æneid*, or else loathsome pariahs, terrible for their malignity, like Lucan's Erichtho. Mediævalism added a deeper horror to this superstitious and ghoulish conception by the thoughts of spiritual responsibility and of league with God's enemies. Damnation was the price of magic power; witchcraft being not merely abominable in the eyes of men but also unpardonable at the bar of divine justice.

Greek  
chivalry.

Several poems of Theocritus are written on the theme of Doric chivalry, and illustrate the heroic age of Greece. They may be compared to the *Idylls of the King*, for their excellence consists in the consummate art with which episodes from the legendary cycles of a bygone age are wrought into polished pictures by a cultivated poet. The thirteenth Idyll is especially remarkable for the exquisite finish of its style and also for the light it throws on the mutual relations of knight and squire in early Greek warfare. Theocritus chooses for the subject of this poem an episode in the life of Heracles, the Dorian hero, when he and other foremost men of Hellas, *θεῖος ἄνθρωπος* (the godlike flower of heroes), followed Jason in the



Argo to the Colchian shores, and he took young Hylas with him; "for even," says Theocritus, "the brazen-hearted son of Amphitryon, who withstood the fierceness of the lion, loved a youth, the charming Hylas, and taught him like a father everything by which he might become a good and famous man; nor would he leave the lad at dawn, or noon, or evening, but sought continually to fashion him after his own heart, and to make him a right yoke-fellow with him in mighty deeds." How he lost Hylas on the Cician shore, and in the wildness of his sorrow let Argo sail without him, and endured the reproach of desertion is well known. Theocritus has wrought the story with more than his accustomed elegance. But I wish to confine attention to the ideal of knighthood and knightly education presented in the passage quoted. Heracles was not merely the lover but the guardian also and tutor of Hylas. He regarded him not only as an object of tenderness, but also as a future friend and helper in the business of life. His constant aim was to form of him a brave and manly warrior, a Herculean hero. And in this respect Heracles was the Eponym and patron of an order which existed throughout Doric Hellas. This order, protected by religious tradition and public favour, regulated by strict rules, and kept within the limits of honour, produced the Cretan lovers, the Lacedæmonian "hearers" and "inspirers," the Theban immortals who lay with faces turned so stanchly to their foes that vice seemed incompatible with such transcendent valour. Achilles was another Eponym of this order. In the twenty-ninth Idyll, the phrase, Ἀχιλλήϊοι φίλοι (friends of Achilles' stamp) is used to describe the most perfect pair of manly friends. The twelfth Idyll is written in a similar if a weaker and more wanton vein. The same longing retrospect is cast upon the old days "when men indeed were golden, when the love of comrades was mutual;" and constancy is rewarded with the same promise of glorious immortality as that which Plato holds out in the *Phædrus*. Bion, we may remark in passing, cele-

Heracles  
and Achilles.

brates with equal praise the friendships of Theseus, Orestes, and Achilles. Without taking some notice of this peculiar institution, in its origin military and austere, it is impossible to understand the chivalrous age of Greece among the Dorian tribes. In the midst of brute force and cunning and an almost absolute disregard of what we are accustomed to understand by chivalry—gentleness, chastity, truth, regard for women and weak persons—this one anomalous sentiment emerges.

Castor and  
Polydeuces.

Passing to another point in which Greek differed from mediæval chivalry, we notice the semi-divine nature of the heroes: *θεῖος ἄνθρωπος* (godlike *élite*) is the name by which they are designated, and supernatural favour is always showered upon them. This indicates a primitive society, a national consciousness ignorant of any remote past. The heroes whom Theocritus celebrates are purely Dorian—Heracles, a Jack the Giant-Killer in his cradle, brawny, fearless, of huge appetite, a mighty trainer, with a scowl to frighten athletes from the field; Polydeuces, a notable bruiser; Castor, a skilled horseman and a man of blood. In one point the twin sons of Leda resembled mediæval knights. They combined the arts of song with martial prowess. Theocritus styles them *ἵππηες κιθαρισταὶ, ἀθλητῆρες ἀοιδοί*—“harp-playing riders of horses, athlete poets.” Their achievements narrated in the twenty-second Idyll may be compared with those of Tristram and Lancelot. The gigantic warrior whom they find by the well in the land of the Bebrycians, gorgeously armed, insolent, and as knotty as a brazen statue, who refuses access to the water and challenges them to combat, exactly resembles one of the lawless giants of the *Morte Arthur*. The courtesy of the Greek hero contrasts well with the barbarian’s violence; and when they come to blows, it is good to observe how address, agility, training, nerve, enable Polydeuces to overcome with ease the vast fury and brute strength of the Bebrycian bully. As the

fight proceeds, the son of Leda improves in flesh and colour, while Amycus loses breath, and sweats his thews away. Polydeuces pounds the giant's neck and face, reducing him to a hideous mass of bruises, and receiving the blows of Amycus upon his chest and loins. At the end of the fight he spares his prostrate foe, on the condition of his respecting the rites of hospitality and dealing courteously with strangers. Throughout it will be noticed how carefully Theocritus maintains the conception of the Hellenic as distinguished from the barbarian combatant. Christian and Pagan are not more distinct in a legend of the San Graal. But Greek chivalry has no magic, no monstrous exaggeration. All is simple, natural, and human. Bellerophon, it is true, was sent after the Chimæra, and Perseus freed Andromeda like St. George from a dragon's mouth. But these fancies of Greek infancy formed no integral part of artistic mythology; instead of being multiplied, they were gradually winnowed out, and the poets laid but little stress upon them.

Greek and  
medieval  
knighthood.

The achievement of Castor is not so favourable to the character of Hellenic chivalry. Having in concert with Polydeuces borne off by guile the daughters of Leucippus from their affianced husbands, Castor kills one of the injured lovers who pursues him and demands restitution. He slays him, though he is his own first cousin, ruthlessly; and while the other son of Aphareus is rushing forward to avenge his brother's death, Zeus hurls lightning and destroys him. Theocritus remarks that it is no light matter to engage in battle with the Tyndarids; but he makes no reflection on what we should call "the honour" of the whole transaction.

Castor  
and the  
daughters of  
Leucippus.

Of all the purely pastoral Idylls by which Theocritus is most widely famous perhaps the finest is the seventh, or *Thalysia*. It glows with the fresh and radiant splendour of southern beauty. In this poem the Idyllist describes the journey of three young men in summer from the city to the farm of their friend Phrasidamus, who has asked them to

The  
*Thalysia*.

take part in the feast with which he proposes to honour Demeter at harvest time. On their way they meet with a goatherd, Lycidas, who invites them, "with a smiling eye," to recline beneath the trees and while away the hours of noon-tide heat with song. "The very lizard," he says, "is sleeping by the wall; but on the hard stones of the footpath your heavy boots keep up a ceaseless ringing." Thus chided by the goatherd they resolve upon a singing match between Simichidas, the teller of the tale, and Lycidas, who offers his crook as the prize of victory. Lycidas begins the contest with that exquisite song to Ageanax, which has proved the despair of all succeeding Idyllists, and which furnished Virgil with one of the most sonorous lines in his *Georgics*. No translation can do justice to the smooth and liquid charm of its melodious verse, in which the tenderest feeling mingles gracefully with delicate humour and with homely descriptions of a shepherd's life. The following lines, forming a panegyric on Comatas, some famed singer of the rustic muse, may be quoted for their pure Greek feeling. Was ever an unlucky mortal envied more melodiously, and yet more quaintly, for his singular fortune?

Song to  
Comatas.

αἰσεῖ δ', ὥς ποκ' ἔδεκτο τὸν αἰπόλον εἰρέα λάρναξ  
ζῶν ἔοντα κακῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἀνακτος·  
ὥς τέ νιν αἱ σιμαὶ λειμωνόθε φέρβον ἰοῖσαι  
κέδρον ἐς ἀδείαν μαλακοῖς ἀνθεσσι μέλισσαι·  
οὐνεκά οἱ γλυκὺ Μοῖσα κατὰ στόματος χέε νέκταρ.  
ὦ μακαριστὲ Κομᾶτα, τὴν θὴν τάδε τερπνὰ πεπόνθης,  
καὶ τὴν κατεκλίσθης ἐς λάρνακα, καὶ τὴν, μελισσᾶν  
κηρία φερβόμενος, ἔτος ὥριον ἐξετέλεσσας.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "He shall sing how of old the great chest closed on the goatherd Living, and held him thrall by the king's infatuate order; Yea, and the blunt-faced bees, as they hied from the flowery meadow, Flew to the fragrant cedar and fed him with honey of blossoms, Seeing the Muse had filled his mouth with heavenly nectar: O most happy Comata! to thee these miracles happened; Thou wast shut in the chest, and feeding on honeycomb only, Through a revolving year didst dree the doom of thy bondage."

The song with which Simichidas contends against his rival is not of equal beauty ; but the goatherd hands him the crook "as a gift of friendship from the Muses." Then he leaves the three friends, who resume their journey till they reach the house of Phrasidamus. There elms and poplar-trees and vines embower them with the pleasant verdure of rustling leaves and the perfumes of summer flowers and autumn fruits. The jar of wine, as sweet as that which made the Cyclops dance among his sheepfold, spreads its fragrance through the air ; while the statue of Demeter, with her handfuls of corn and poppy-heads, stands smiling by.

This seventh Idyll, of which no adequate idea can be conveyed by mere description, may serve as the type of those purely rustic poems which since the days of Theocritus have from age to age been imitated by versifiers emulous of his gracefulness. If space allowed, it would not be uninteresting to analyse the Idyll of the two old fishermen, who gossip together so wisely and contentedly in their hut by the sea-shore, mending their nets the while, and discoursing gravely of their dreams. In this Idyll, which is, however, possibly the work of one of Theocritus' imitators, and in the second, which consists of a singing match between two harvest-men, the native homeliness of the Idyllic muse appears to best advantage.

Scenes of  
common  
life.

With this brief and insufficient notice, I must leave Theocritus in order to say a few words about his successors. Bion's poetry, when compared with that of Theocritus, declines considerably from the Bucolic type. His Idylls are for the most part fragments of delicately finished love-songs, remarkable for elegance and sweetness more than for masculine vigour or terse expression. In Bion the artificial style of pastoral begins. Theocritus had made cows and pipes and shepherds fashionable. His imitators followed him, without the humour and natural taste which rendered his pictures so attractive. We already trace the frigid affectation of Bucolic interest in the

Bion's  
poetry.

The lament  
for Adonis.

elegy on Bion : "He sang no song of wars or tears, but piped of Pan and cowherds, and fed flocks, singing as he went ; pipes he fashioned, and milked the sweet-breathed heifer, and taught kisses, and cherished in his bosom love, and stole the heart of Aphrodite." As it happens, the most original and powerful of Bion's remaining poems is a "Song of Tears," of passionate lamentation, of pathetic grief, composed, not as a pastoral ditty, but on the occasion of one of those splendid festivals in which the Syrian rites of slain Adonis were celebrated by Greek women. The *ἐπιτάφιος Ἀδωνιδος* (Threnody for Adonis) is written with a fiery passion and a warmth of colouring peculiar to Bion. The verse bounds with tiger leaps, its full-breathed dactyls panting with the energy of rapid flight. The tender and reflective beauty of Theocritus, the concentrated passion of his Simætha, and the flowing numbers of his song to Adonis are quite lost and swallowed up in the Asiatic fury of Bion's lament. The poem begins with the cry *Αἶαζ' ὦ τὸν Ἀδωνιν*, which is variously repeated in Idyllic fashion as a refrain throughout the lamentation.<sup>1</sup> After this prelude, having as it were struck the keynote to the music, the singer cries :—

μηκέτι πορφύρεοις ἐνὶ φάρεσι Κύπρι κάθεινδε·  
ἔγρεο δειλαία κυανόστολε καὶ πλατάγησον  
στάθεα, καὶ λέγε πᾶσιν· ἀπώλετο καλὸς Ἀδωνις.<sup>2</sup>  
αἶαζ' ὦ τὸν Ἀδωνιν· ἐπειάουσιν Ἑρωτες.

Notice how the long words follow one another with quick pulses and flashes of sound. The same peculiar rhythm recurs when,

<sup>1</sup> The exclamation occurs in a fragment of Sappho (Bergk, No. 63), whose lyric on the legend of Adonis may have suggested Bion's Idyll.

<sup>2</sup> "Nay, no longer in robes of purple recline, Aphroditë :  
Wake from thy sleep, sad queen, black-stoled, rain blows on thy  
bosom ;  
Cry to the listening world, *He is lost to us, lovely Adonis !*  
Wail, wail, Ah for Adonis ! The Loves respond with lamenting."

after describing the beautiful dead body of Adonis, the poet returns to Aphrodite :—

ἃ δ' Ἀφροδίτα  
 λυσαμένα πλοκαμίδας ἀνὰ δρυμὸς ἀλάληται  
 πενθαλία, νήπλεκτος, ἀσάνδαλος· αἱ δὲ βάτοι νιν  
 ἐρχομένην κείροντι καὶ ἱερὸν αἶμα δρέπονται.  
 ὅξυν δὲ κωκύνουσα δι' ἄγκυα μακρὰ φορεῖται,  
 Ἀσσύριον βοόωσα πόσιν, καὶ πολλὰ καλεῖσα.<sup>1</sup>

There are few passages of poetical imagery more striking than this picture of the queen of beauty tearing through the forest, heedless of her tender limbs and useless charms, and calling on her Syrian lover. What follows is even more passionate ; after some lines of mere description, the ecstasy again descends upon the poet, and he bursts into the wildest of most beautiful laments :—

ὥς ἶδεν, ὥς ἐνόησεν Ἀδώνιδος ἄσχετον ἔλκος,  
 ὥς ἶδε φοῖνιον αἶμα μαραινομένην περὶ μηρῶ,  
 πάχεας ἀμπετάσασα κινύρετο· μέινον Ἀδωνί,  
 δίσποτμε μέινον Ἀδωνί, κ.τ.λ.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> " But she, the Queen Aphroditë,

Loosing her locks to the air, roams far and wide through the forest,  
 Drowned in grief, dishevelled, unsandalled, and as she flies onward,  
 Briars stab at her feet and cull the blood of the goddess.  
 She with shrill lamentation thro' glen and thro' glade is carried,  
 Calling her Syrian lord, demanding him back and demanding."

<sup>2</sup> " She when she saw, when she knew the unstanachable wound of  
 Adonis,

When she beheld the red blood on his pale thigh's withering blossom,  
 Spreading her arms full wide, she moaned out : ' Stay, my Adonis !  
 Stay, ill-fated Adonis ! that I once more may approach thee !  
 Clasp thee close to my breast, and these lips mingle with thy lips !  
 Rouse for a moment, Adonis, and kiss me again for the last time ;  
 Kiss me as long as the kiss can last on the lips of a lover ;  
 Till from thy inmost soul to my mouth and down to my marrow  
 Thy life-breath shall run, and I quaff the wine of thy philtre,  
 Draining the draught of thy love : that kiss will I treasure, Adonis,  
 E'en as it were thyself ; since thou, ill-starred, art departing,

Aphrodite's  
Threnos.

The last few lines of her soliloquy are exquisitely touching, especially those in which Aphrodite deplores her immortality, and acknowledges the supremacy of the queen of the grave over Love and Beauty. What follows is pitched at a lower key. There is too much of merely Anacreontic prettiness about the description of the bridal bed and the lamenting Loves. Aphrodite's passion reminds us of a Neapolitan *Stabat Mater*, in which the frenzy of love and love-like piety are strangely blended. But the concluding picture suggests nothing nobler than a painting of Albano, in which *amoretti* are plentiful, and there is much elegance of composition. This remark applies to the rest of Bion's poetry. If Theocritus deserves to be illustrated by the finest of Greek bas-reliefs, Bion cannot claim more than an exquisitely chiselled gem. Certainly the second and third fragments are very charming; and the lines to Hesper (fragment 16) have so much beauty that I attempt a version of them :—

Bion's  
fragments.

“Hesper, thou golden light of happy love,  
Hesper, thou holy pride of purple eve,  
Moon among stars, but star beside the moon,  
Hail, friend ! and since the young moon sets to-night  
Too soon below the mountains, lend thy lamp  
And guide me to the shepherd whom I love.  
No theft I purpose ; no wayfaring man  
Belated would I watch and make my prey ;  
Love is my goal, and Love how fair it is,  
When friend meets friend sole in the silent night,  
Thou knowest, Hesper !”

Moschus.

In Moschus we find less originality and power than belong to Bion. His *Europa* is an imitation of the style in which Theocritus wrote *Hylas* ; but the copy is frigid and affected by the side of its model. Five-and-twenty lines, for instance, are devoted to an elaborate description of a basket, which leaves

Fleeing me far, O Adonis, to Acheron faring, the sad realm  
Ruled by a stern savage king : while I, the unhappy, the luckless,  
I live ; goddess am I, and I may not follow or find thee.”



no very definite impression on the mind ;<sup>1</sup> whereas every leaf and tendril on the cup which Theocritus introduces into the first Idyll stands out vividly before us. Nothing, moreover, could be more unnatural and tedious than the long speech which Europa makes when she is being carried out to sea upon the bull's back. Yet we must allow that there is spirit and beauty in the triumph of sea monsters who attend Poseidon and do honour to the chosen bride of Zeus ; Nereids riding on dolphins, and Tritons, "the deep-voiced minstrels of the sea, sounding a marriage song on their long-winding conchs."<sup>2</sup> The whole of this piece is worthy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Moschus is remarkable for occasional felicities of language. In this line for example,

εὔτε καὶ ἀτρεκέων ποιμαίνεται ἔθνος ὀνείρων,

"Then when of sooth-saying dreams the flocks are leisurely straying,"

an old thought receives new and subtle beauty by its expression. If *Megara* (Idyll iv.) be really the work of Moschus, which is doubtful, it reflects more honour on him. The dialogue between the wife and mother of the maddened Heracles, after he has murdered his children and gone forth to execute fresh labours, is worthy of their tragic situation. *Ἐρως δραπέτης* (Runaway Love) again is an exquisite little poem in the Anacreontic style of Bion, fully equal to any of its models. The fame of Moschus will, however, depend upon the Elegy on Bion. I have already hinted that its authorship is questioned. In my opinion it far surpasses any of his compositions in respect of definite thought and original imagina-

*Megara and Runaway Love.*

<sup>1</sup> This basket for holding flowers, the work of Hephæstus, had the tale of Io carved upon it. So Catullus, in the counterpane of Thetis, has wrought in needlework the story of Ariadne, and Statius in the mantle given by Adrastus to Admetus has woven that of Hero and Leander. Both of these Roman poets beat Moschus in picturesque effect.

<sup>2</sup> Italian art of the Renaissance, in the designs of Mantegna and Raphael and Giulio Romano, did full justice to these marine triumphs.

The Elegy  
on Bion.

tion. Though the Bucolic commonplaces are used with obvious artificiality, and much is borrowed from Theocritus' Lament for Daphnis, yet so true and delicate a spirit is imbreathed into the old forms as to render them quite fresh.<sup>1</sup> The passage which begins *αἰ αἰ ταὶ μαλάχαι* (Ah, ah, the mallows) every dabbler in Greek literature knows by heart. And what can be more ingeniously pathetic than the *nuances* of feeling expressed in these lines :—

φάρμακον ἦλθε, Βίων, ποτὶ σὸν στόμα· φάρμακον εἶδες.  
πῶς τευ τοῖς χεῖλεσσι ποτέδραμε κοῦκ ἐγλυκάνθη;  
τίς δὲ βροτὸς τοσσοῦτον ἀνάμερος ἢ κεράσαι τοι  
ἢ δοῦναι λαλέοντι τὸ φάρμακον;<sup>2</sup>

And :—

τίς ποτε σὴ σίριγγι μελίζεται, ὦ τριπόθητε;  
τίς δ' ἐπὶ σοῖς καλάμοις θήσει στόμα; τίς θρασὺς οὕτως;  
εἰσέτι γὰρ πνείει τὰ σὰ χεῖλα καὶ τὸ σὸν ἄσθμα·  
ἀχὼ δ' ἐν δονάκεσσι τεῶς ἐπιβόσκειτ' αἰοιδᾶς.<sup>3</sup>

Or again :—

ἀχὼ δ' ἐν πέτρῃσιν ὀδύρεται ὅττι σιωπῇ,  
κοῖκέτι μιμεῖται τὰ σὰ χεῖλα.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Here is a fragment from the threnody on Daphnis :—

ἔβα ῥόν· ἔκλυσε δίνα  
τὸν Μοῖσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ.

"Down death's tide he went : the whirlpool eddying swallowed  
Him by the Nymphs beloved, the man right dear to the Muses."

<sup>2</sup> "Poison, O Bion, came to thy lips : thou tasted of poison.  
How could it touch those lips, and not be turned into honey?  
Who was the wight so harsh as to mix the potion, and give thee  
Poison to drink, having heard thee speak?"

<sup>3</sup> "Who shall play on thy pipe, O thrice beloved and desired one?  
Who to thy reeds shall place his mouth? who dares to approach  
them?

Seeing it breathes e'en now of thy lips and the breath of thy bosom;  
Echo among the reeds still feeds on the songs of thy singing." •

<sup>4</sup> "Echo haunting the rocks laments in the stillness around thee  
That no more she may mimic thy voice."

There is also something very touching in the third line of this strophe :—

Hymns in  
Hades.

κεῖνος ὁ ταῖς ἀγέλαισιν ἐράσμιος οὐκέτι μέλπει,  
οὐκέτ' ἐρημαίησιν ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ἡμενος ᾄδει,  
ἀλλὰ παρὰ Πλουτῇ μέλος Ληθαίων ἀείδει,<sup>1</sup>

and in the allusion made to the Sicilian girlhood of grim Persephone (126-129). This vein of tender and melodious sentiment, which verges on the *concelli* of modern art, seems different from the style of *Europa*.

To English readers, the three elegies, on Daphnis, on Adonis, and on Bion, severally attributed to Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, will always be associated with the names of Milton and Shelley. There is no comparison whatever between *Lycidas* and *Daphnis*. In spite of the misplaced apparition of St. Peter, and of the frigidity which belongs to pastoral allegory, *Lycidas* is a richer and more splendid monument of elegiac verse. The simplicity of the Theocritean dirge contrasts strangely with the varied wealth of Milton's imagery, the few ornaments of Greek art with the intricate embroideries of modern fancy. To quote passages from these well-known poems would be superfluous; but let a student of literature compare the passages, *πᾶ ποκ' ἄρ' ἦσθ'* and *ὦ Πάν Πάν* with Milton's paraphrase "Where were ye, nymphs,"—or the concise paragraphs about the flowers and valleys that mourned for Daphnis with the luxuriance of Milton's invocation "Return, Alpheus."

Greek and  
English  
elegies.

When Shelley wrote *Adonais*, his mind was full of the elegies on Bion and Adonis. Of direct translation in his Lament there is very little; but he has absorbed both of the Greek poems, and transmuted them into the substance of his own mind. Urania takes the place of Aphrodite—the heavenly queen, "most musical of mourners," bewails the

Shelley's  
*Adonais*.

<sup>1</sup> "Now no more to the herds doth he pipe, the desirable herdsman,  
No more sits and sings 'neath boughs of desolate oak-trees,  
But by Pluto's throne chants Lethe songs of oblivion."

loss of her poetical consort. Instead of loves, the couch of Adonais is surrounded by the thoughts and fancies of which he was the parent; and, instead of gods and goddesses, the power of nature is invoked to weep for him and take him to herself. Whatever Bion and Moschus recorded as a fact becomes, consistently with the spiritualising tendency of modern genius, symbolical in Shelley's poem. His art has alchemised the whole structure, idealising what was material, and disembodiment the sentiments which were incarnated in simple images. *Adonais* is a sublime rhapsody; its multitudinous ideas are whirled like drops of golden rain, on which the sun of the poet's fancy gleams with ever-changing rainbow hues. In drifts and eddies they rush past, delighting us with their rapidity and brilliancy; but the impression left upon our mind is vague and incomplete, when compared with the few and distinct ideas presented by the Doric Elegies. At the end of *Alastor* there occurs a touching reminiscence of Moschus, but the outline is less faint than in *Adonais*, the transmutation even more complete.

Tennyson  
and the  
Greek idyllic  
poets.

Tennyson, among the poets of the nineteenth century, owes much to the Greek idyllists. His genius appears to be in many respects akin to theirs, and the age in which he lived was not unlike the Ptolemaic period. Unfitted, perhaps, by temperament for the most impassioned lyrics, he delights in minutely finished pictures, in felicities of expression and in subtle harmonies of verse. Like Theocritus, he finds in nature and in the legends of past ages subjects congenial to his muse. *Enone* and *Tithonus* are steeped in the golden beauty of Syracusan art. "Come down, O maid,"—that loveliest shepherd's song from *The Princess*—transfers, with perfect taste, the Greek idyllic feeling to Swiss scenery; the new wine of modern landscape and romantic emotion has been poured successfully into old bottles; nothing can be fresher, and not even the *Thalysia* is sweeter. It would be easy enough to collect minor

instances which prove that the last Laureate's mind was impregnated with the thoughts and feelings of the poems I have been discussing. For instance, both the figure, "softer than sleep," and the comparison of a strong man's muscles to the smooth rush of running water over sunken stones, which we find in *Enid*, occur in Theocritus.

At the end of this chapter I cannot refrain from once more recommending all lovers of pure verse and perfect scenery to study the Greek idyllists upon the shores of the Mediterranean. Nor would it be possible to carry a better guide-book to the statue-galleries of Rome and Naples. For in the verses of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, the æsthetic principles of the Greeks, in the age to which our relics of their statuary for the most part belong, are feelingly and pithily expressed ; while the cold marble, that seems to require so many commentaries, receives from their idyllic colouring new life.

Return to  
Mediterranean land-  
scape.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE ANTHOLOGY

The History of its Compilation—Collections of Meleager, Philippus, Agathias, Cephalas, Planudes—The Palatine MS.—The Sections of the Anthology—Dedicatory Epigrams—Simonides—Epitaphs: Real and Literary—Callimachus—Epigrams on Poets—Antipater of Sidon—Hortatory Epigrams—Palladas—Satiric Epigrams—Lucillius—Amatory Epigrams—Meleager, Straton, Philodemus, Antipater, Rufinus, Paulus Silentarius, Agathias, Plato—Descriptive Epigrams.

Place of the  
Anthology  
in Greek  
literature.

THE Anthology may from some points of view be regarded as the most valuable relic of antique literature which we possess. Composed of several thousand short poems, written for the most part in the elegiac metre, at different times and by a multitude of authors, it is coextensive with the whole current of Greek history, from the splendid period of the Persian War to the decadence of Christianised Byzantium. Many subjects of interest in Greek life, which would otherwise have had to be laboriously illustrated from the historians or the comic poets, are here fully and melodiously set forth. If we might compare the study of Greek Literature to a journey in some splendid mountain region, then we might say with propriety that from the sparkling summits where Æschylus and Sophocles and Pindar sit enthroned, we turn in our less strenuous moods to gather the meadow-flowers of Meleager, Palladas, Callimachus. Placing them between the leaves of the book of our memory, we possess an everlasting treasure of sweet thoughts, which will serve in after days to

remind us of those scenes of Olympian majesty through which we travelled. The slight effusions of these minor poets are even nearer to our hearts than the masterpieces of the noblest Greek literature. They treat with a touching limpidity and sweetness of the joys and fears and hopes and sorrows that are common to all humanity. They introduce us to the actual life of a bygone civilisation, stripped of its political or religious accidents, and tell us that the Greeks of Athens or of Sidon thought and felt exactly as we feel. Even the *Graffiti* of Pompeii have scarcely more power to reconstruct the past and summon as in dreams the voices and the forms of long-since buried men. There is yet another way in which the Anthology brings us closer to the Greeks than any other portion of their literature. The Lyrist

Familiar  
and fugitive  
verses.

express an intense and exalted mood of the race in its divine adolescence. The Tragedians exhibit the genius of Athens in its maturity. The Idyllists utter a rich nightingale note from the woods and fields of Sicily. But the Anthology carries us through all the phases of Hellenic civilisation upon its uninterrupted undercurrent of elegiac melody. The clear fresh light of dawn, the splendour of noonday, the mellow tints of sunset, and the sad gray hues of evening are all there. It is a tree which bears the leaves and buds and blossoms and fruitage of the Greek spirit on its boughs at once. Many intervals in the life of the nation which are represented by no other portion of its literature—the ending, for example, of the first century before Christ—here receive a brilliant illustration. Again there is no more signal proof of the cosmopolitan nature of the later Greek culture than is afforded by the Anthology. From Rome, Alexandria, Palestine, Byzantium, no less than from the isles and continent of Greece, are recruited the poets whose works are enshrined in this precious Golden Treasury of fugitive pieces.

The history of the Anthology is not without interest. By a

Compilation:  
of the  
Anthology.

gradual process of compilation and accretion it grew into its present form from very slight beginnings. The first impulse to collect epigrams seems to have originated in connection with archæology. From the very earliest the Greeks were in the habit of engraving sentences, for the most part in verse, upon their temples, statues, trophies, tombs, and public monuments of all kinds. Many of these inscriptions were used by Herodotus and Thucydides as authorities for facts and dates. But about 200 B.C. one Polemon made a general collection of the authentic epigrams to be found upon the public buildings of the Greek cities. After him Alcetas copied the dedicatory verses at Delphi. Similar collections are ascribed to Mnestor and Apellas Ponticus. Aristodemus is mentioned as the compiler of the epigrams of Thebes. Philochorus performed the same service for Athens. Neoptolemus of Paros and the philosopher Euhemerus are also credited with similar antiquarian labours. So far, the collectors of epigrams had devoted themselves to historical monuments; and of their work, in any separate form at least, no trace exists. But Meleager of Gadara (60 B.C.) conceived the notion of arranging in alphabetical order a selection of lyric and erotic poetry, which he dedicated to his friend Diocles. He called this compilation by the name of *στέφανος*, or wreath, each of the forty-six poets whom he admitted into his book being represented by a flower. Philip of Thessalonica in the time of Trajan, following his example, incorporated into the garland of Meleager those epigrams which had acquired celebrity in the interval. About the same time or a little later, Straton of Sardis made a special anthology of poems on one class of subjects, which is known as the *μούσα παιδική* (poems on boy-love), and into which, besides ninety-eight of his own epigrams, he admitted many of the compositions of Meleager, Philip, and other predecessors. These collections belong to the classical period of Greek literature. But the Anthology, as we possess it, had not yet come into existence. It remained for Agathias, a Byzantine

Meleager  
and Straton.



Greek of the age of Justinian, to undertake a comprehensive compilation from all the previous collections. After adding numerous poems of a date posterior to Straton, especially those of Paulus Silentarius, Macedonius, Rufinus, and himself, he edited his *κύκλος ἐπιγραμμάτων* (cycle of epigrams), divided into seven books. The first book contained dedicatory epigrams, the second descriptive poems, the third epitaphs, the fourth reflections on the various events of life, the fifth satires, the sixth erotic verses, the seventh exhortations to enjoyment. Upon the general outline of the Anthology as arranged by Agathias two subsequent collections were founded. Constantinus Cephalas, in the tenth century, at Byzantium, and in the reign of Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, undertook a complete revision and recombination of all pre-existing anthologies. With the patience of a literary bookworm, to whom the splendid libraries of the metropolis were accessible, he set about his work, and gave to the Greek Anthology that form which it now bears. But the vicissitudes of the Anthology did not terminate with the labours of Cephalas. Early in the fourteenth century a monk, Planudes, set to work upon a new edition. It appears that he contented himself with compiling and abridging from the collection of Cephalas. His principal object was to expurgate it from impurities and to supersede it by what he considered a more edifying text. Accordingly he emended, castrated, omitted, interpolated, altered, and remodelled at his own sweet will: "Non magis disposuit quam mutilavit et ut ita dicam castravit hunc librum, detractis lascivioribus epigrammatis, ut ipse gloriatur," says Lascaris in the preface to his edition of the Planudean Anthology.<sup>1</sup> He succeeded, however, to the height of his desire; for copies ceased to be made of the Anthology of Cephalas; and when Europe in the fifteenth century awoke to the study of Greek

Agathias and  
Cephalas.

Planudes

<sup>1</sup> "He mutilated, and, so to speak, castrated this book quite as much as he arranged its contents, by withdrawing the more lascivious epigrams, according to his own boast."

The Palatine  
manuscript.

literature, no other collection but that of Planudes was known. Fortunately for this most precious relic of antiquity, there did exist one exemplar of the Anthology of Cephalas. Having escaped the search of Poggio, Aurispa, Filelfo, Poliziano, and of all the emissaries whom the Medici employed in ransacking the treasure-houses of Europe, this unique manuscript was at last discovered in 1606 by Claude de Saumaise, better known as Milton's antagonist Salmasius, in the Palatine Library at Heidelberg. A glance at this treasure assured the young scholar—for Saumaise was then aged only twenty-two—that he had made one of the most important discoveries which remained within the reach of modern students. He spent years in preparing a critical edition of its text; but all his work was thrown away: for the Leyden publishers to whom he applied refused to publish the Greek without a Latin version, and death overtook him before he had completed the requisite labour. Meanwhile the famous Palatine MS. had been transferred, after the sack of Heidelberg in 1623, to the Vatican, as a present to Pope Gregory XV. Isaac Voss, the rival of Saumaise, induced one Lucas Langermann to undertake a journey to Rome, in order that he might make a faithful transcript of the MS. and publish it, to the annoyance of the great French scholar. But Saumaise dying in 1653, the work, undertaken from motives of jealousy, was suspended. The MS. reposed still upon the shelves of the Vatican Library; and in 1776 the Abbé Giuseppe Spalletti completed a trustworthy copy of its pages, which was bought by Ernest Duke of Gotha and Altenburg for his library. In the year 1797 the MS. itself was transferred to Paris after the treaty of Tolentino; and in 1815 it was restored to Heidelberg, where it now reposes. Meanwhile Brunck had published, from copies of this MS., the greater portion of the Anthology in his *Analecta Veterum Poetarum Græcorum*; and Jacobs between 1794 and 1814 had edited the whole collection with minutest accuracy upon the faith of the Abbé Spalletti's exemplar. The edition of Didot,

to which I shall refer in my examination of the Anthology,<sup>1</sup> is based not only on the labours of Brunck and Jacobs, but also upon the MSS. of the unfortunate Chardon de la Rochette, who, after spending many years of his life in the illustration of the Anthology of Cephalas, was forced in old age to sell his collections for a small sum. They passed in 1836 into the possession of the (then) Imperial Library.

The Palatine MS., which is our sole authority for the Anthology as arranged by Cephalas, is a 4to parchment of 710 pages. It has been written by different hands, at different times, and on different plans of arrangement. The index does not always agree with the contents, but seems to be that of an older collection, of which the one we possess is an imperfect copy. Yet Cephalas is often mentioned, and always with affectionate reverence, by the transcribers of the MS. In one place he is called *ὁ μακάριος καὶ ἀείμνηστος καὶ τριπλόθης ἀνθρώπος*, "the blessed man, who is ever to be held in thrice affectionate and longing recollection," the sentiment of which words we in the middle of this nineteenth century may most cordially echo.

Description  
of this  
codex.

The first section of the Anthology is devoted to Christian epigrams upon the chief religious monuments and statues of Byzantium. However these may interest the ecclesiastical student, they have no value for a critic of Greek poetry. The second section consists of a poem in hexameters upon the statues which adorned the gymnasium of Zeuxippus. Some conception may be formed, after the perusal of this very pedestrian composition, of the art-treasures which Byzantium contained in the fifth century. Authentic portraits of the great poets and philosophers of Greece, as well as works of imagina-

Sections  
of the  
Anthology.

<sup>1</sup> Paris, 1864-1872. The translations quoted by me are taken principally from the collections of Wellesley (*Anthologia Polyglotta*) and Burgess (Bohn's Series), and from the Miscellanies of the late J. A. Symonds, M.D. The versions contributed by myself have no signature.

tion illustrative of the *Iliad* and the Attic tragedies, might then be studied in one place of public resort. Byzantium had become a vast museum for the ancient world. The third section is devoted to mural inscriptions from the temple of Apollonis in Cyzicus. The fourth contains the prefaces of Meleager, Philip, and Agathias, to their several collections. The fifth, which includes 309 epigrams, is consecrated to erotic poetry. The sixth, which numbers 358, consists of a collection of inscriptions from temples and public monuments recording the illustrious actions of the Greeks or votive offerings of private persons. In the seventh we read 748 epitaphs of various sorts. The eighth carries us again into the dismal region of post-pagan literature: it contains nothing but 254 poems from the pen of Saint Gregory the Theologian. The 827 epigrams of the ninth section are called by their collector *ἐπιδεικτικά*; that is to say, they are composed in illustration of a variety of subjects, anecdotal, rhetorical, and of general interest. Perhaps this part of the whole Anthology has been the favourite of modern imitators and translators. Passing to the tenth section we find 126 semi-philosophical poems, most of which record the vanity of human life and advise mortals to make the best of their brief existence by enjoyment. The eleventh is devoted to satire. It is here that the reflex influence of Latin on Greek literature is most perceptible. The twelfth section bears the name of Straton, and exhibits in its 258 epigrams the morality of ancient Hellas under the aspect which has least attraction for modern readers. The thirteenth embraces a few epigrams in irregular metres. The fourteenth is made up of riddles and oracles. The fifteenth again has half a century of poems which could not well be catalogued elsewhere. The sixteenth contains that part of the Planudean collection which does not occur in our copy of the Anthology of Cephalas. It may be mentioned in conclusion that, with one or two very inconsiderable exceptions, none of the poems of the early Greek

lyrists and Gnostic writers are received into the so-called Anthology.

To the student of Greek history and Greek customs, no section of the Anthology is more interesting than that which includes the ἐπιγράμματα ἀναθηματικά, the record of the public and the private votive-offerings in Hellas. Here, as in a scroll spread out before us, in the silver language of the great Simonides,<sup>1</sup> may be read the history of the achievements of the Greeks against Xerxes and his hosts. The heroes of Marathon, the heroes of Thermopylæ, Megistias the soothsayer, Leonidas the king, Pausanias the general, the seamen of Salamis, the Athenian cavalry, the Spartans of Platæa, all receive their special tribute of august celebration at the hands of the poet who best knew how to suit simple words to splendid actions. Again the στήλη (votive pillar) which commemorated in Athens the patriotic tyrannicide of Aristogeiton, the statue of Pan which Miltiades after Marathon consecrated in honour of his victory, the trophies erected by Pausanias at Delphi to Phœbus, the altar to Zeus Eleutherios dedicated in common by all the Greeks, the tripod sent to Delphi by Gelon and the other tyrants of Sicily after their victory over the Carthaginians, for each and all of these Simonides was called on to compose imperishable verse. Our heart trembles even now when we read such lines as these :<sup>2</sup>—

Epigraphic  
poems—  
Simonides.

ὦ ξείν' ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῇδε  
κείμεθα τοῖς κείνων ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.

And who does not feel that the grandeur of the occasion

<sup>1</sup> I have spoken of these compositions of Simonides as though they all belonged to the Dedicatory Epigrams. A large number of them are, however, incorporated among the Epitaphs proper.

<sup>2</sup> "To those of Lacedæmon, stranger, tell,  
That, as their laws commanded, here we fell."

JOHN STERLING.

There is no very good translation of this couplet. The difficulty lies in the word ῥήμασι. Is this equivalent to ῥήτρας, as Cicero who renders it by *legibus* seems to think? Or is it the same as *orders*?

exalts above all suspicion of prosiness the frigid simplicity of the following?<sup>1</sup>—

τόνδε ποθ' Ἑλληνες ῥώμῃ χερὺς, ἔργῳ Ἄρης,  
 εὐτόλμῳ ψυχῆς λήματι πειθόμενοι,  
 Πέρσας ἐξελάσαντες, εἰλείθερον Ἑλλάδι κόσμον  
 ἰδρίσαντο Διὸς βωμὸν Ἐλευθερίον.

Dedicatory  
poems.

But it is not merely within the sphere of world-famous history that the Dedicatory Epigrams are interesting. Multitudes of them introduce us to the minutest facts of private life in Greece. We see the statues of gods hung round with flowers and scrolls, the shrines filled with waxen tablets, wayside chapels erected to Priapus or to Pan, the gods of the shore honoured with dripping clothes of mariners, the Paphian home of Aphrodite rich with jewels and with mirrors and with silks suspended by devout adorers of both sexes. A fashionable church in modern Italy—the Annunziata at Florence, for example, or St. Anthony at Padua—is not more crowded with pictures of people saved from accidents, with silver hearts and waxen limbs, with ribands and artificial flowers, with rosaries and precious stones, and with innumerable objects that only tell their tale of bygone vows to the votary who hung them there, than were the temples of our Lady of Love in Cneidos or in Corinth. In the epigrams before us we read how hunters hung their nets to Pan, and fishermen their gear to Poseidon; gardeners their figs and pomegranates to Priapus; blacksmiths their hammers and tongs to Hephæstus. Stags are dedicated to Artemis and Phœbus, and corn-sheaves to Demeter, who also receives the plough, the sickle, and the oxen of farmers. A poor man offers the produce of his field to Pan; the first-fruits of the vine are set aside for Bacchus and his crew of satyrs; Pallas obtains the shuttle of a widow

Ex voto  
offerings.

<sup>1</sup> "What time the Greeks with might and warlike deed,  
 Sustained by courage in their hour of need,  
 Drove forth the Persians, they to Zeus that frees  
 This altar built, the free fair pride of Greece."

who resolves to quit her life of care and turn to Aphrodite; the eunuch Alexis offers his cymbals, drums, flutes, knife, and golden curls to Cybele. Phœbus is presented with a golden cicada, Zeus with an old ash-spear that has seen service, Ares with a shield and cuirass. A poet dedicates roses to the maids of Helicon and laurel wreaths to Apollo. Scribes offer their pens and ink and pumice-stone to Hermes; cooks hang up their pots and pans and spits to the Mercury of the kitchen. Withered crowns and revel-cups are laid upon the shrine of Lais: Anchises suspends his white hair to Aphrodite, Endymion his bed and coverlid to Artemis, Daphnis his club to Pan. Agathias inscribes his *Daphniuca* to the Paphian queen. Prexidiké has an embroidered dress to dedicate. Alkibié offers her hair to Heré, Lais her mirror to Aphrodite, Krobylus his boy's curls to Apollo, Charixeinos his long tresses to the nymphs. Meleager yields the lamp of his love-hours to Venus; Lucillius vows his hair after shipwreck to the sea-gods; Evanthé gives her thyrsus and stag's hide to Bacchus. Women erect altars to Eleithuia and Asclepius after childbirth. Sophocles dedicates a thanksgiving shrine for poetic victories. Simonides and Bacchylides record their triumphs upon votive tablets. Gallus, saved from a lion, consecrates his hair and vestments to the queen of Dindymus. Prostitutes abandon their ornaments to Kupris on their marriage. The effeminate Statullion bequeaths his false curls and flutes and silken wardrobe to Priapus. Sailors offer a huge cuttlefish to the sea-deities. An Isthmian victor suspends his bit, bridle, spurs, and whip to Poseidon. A boy emerging into manhood leaves his petasos and strigil and chlamys to Hermes, the god of games. Phryné dedicates a winged Erôs as the first-fruits of her earnings. Hadrian celebrates the trophies erected by Trajan to Zeus. Theocritus writes inscriptions for Uranian Aphrodite in the house of his friend Amphicles, for the Bacchic tripod of Damomenes, and for the marble muse of Xenocles. Erinna dedicates the picture of

Facts of  
private life.



Agatharkis. Melinna, Sabæthis, and Mikythus are distinguished by poems placed beneath their portraits. There is even a poem on the picture of a hernia dedicated apparently in some Asklepiæan shrine; and a traveller erects the brazen image of a frog in thanksgiving for a draught of wayside water. Cleonymus consecrates the statues of the nymphs:—

αἱ τὰδε βένθη  
ἀμβρόσιαι ῥοδέοις στρίβετε ποσσὶν αἶψι.

“Ambrosial nymphs, who alway tread these watery deeps  
with roseate feet.”

It will be seen by this rapid enumeration that a good many of the Dedicatory Epigrams are really epideiktic or rhetorical; that is to say, they are written on imaginary subjects. But the large majority undoubtedly record such votive offerings as were common enough in Greece with or without epigrams to grace them.

Epitaphs on  
persons  
lately dead.

What I have just said about the distinction between real and literary epigrams composed for dedications, applies still more to the epitaphs. These divide themselves into two well-marked classes—(i.) actual sepulchral inscriptions or poems written immediately upon the death of persons contemporary with the author; and (ii.) literary exercises in the composition of verses appropriate to the tombs of celebrated historical or mythical characters. To the first class belong the beautiful epitaphs of Meleager upon Clearista (i. 307), upon Heliodora (i. 365), upon Charixinos, a boy eighteen years old (i. 363), upon Antipater of Sidon (i. 355), and the three which he designed for his own grave (i. 352). Callimachus has left some perfect models in this species of composition. The epitaph on Heracleitus, a poet of Halicarnassus, which has been exquisitely translated by the author of *Ionica*, has a grace of movement and a tenderness of pathos that are unsurpassed: <sup>1</sup>—

εἰπέ τις, Ἡράκλειτε, τὸν μόνον, ἐς δέ με δάκρυ  
ἦγαγεν, ἐμνήσθην δ' ὅσσ' αἰς ἀμφοτέρω

<sup>1</sup> “They told me, Heracleitus, they told me you were dead;  
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.



ἦλιον ἐν λίσσῃ κατεδίσαμεν· ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν που,  
 ξείν' Ἀλικαρνησεῦ, τετράπαλαι σποδιή·  
 αἱ δὲ τεαὶ ζῶουσιν ἀηδόνες, ἥσιν ὁ πάντων  
 ἀρπακτὴς Ἀΐδης οὐκ ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλεῖ.

Callimachus

His epitaph on the sea-wrecked Sopolis (i. 325), though less touching, opens with a splendid note of sorrow :<sup>1</sup>—

ᾠφελε μῆδ' ἐγένοντο θοαὶ νέες· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἡμεῖς  
 παῖδα Διοκλείδου Σώπολιν ἐστένομεν·  
 νῦν δ' ὁ μὲν εἰν ἀλί που φέρεται νέκυσ' ἀντὶ δ' ἐκείνου  
 οὔνομα καὶ κενὸν σῆμα παρερχόμεθα.

The following couplet upon Saon (i. 360) is marked by its perfection of brevity :<sup>2</sup>—

τῷδε Σάων ὁ Δίκωνος Ἀκάνθιος ἱερὸν ἕπνον  
 κοιμᾶται· θνάσκειν μὴ λέγε τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς.

Among the genuine epitaphs by the greatest of Greek authors, Plato, none is more splendid than Plato's upon Aster (i. 402) :<sup>3</sup>—

Ἀστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωῷσιν Ἑῶος·  
 νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις Ἑσπερος ἐν φθιμένοισι.

I wept, as I remembered, how often you and I  
 Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

"And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,  
 A handful of gray ashes, long, long ago at rest,  
 Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake,  
 For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take."

W. CORY.

<sup>1</sup> "Would that swift ships had never been ; for so  
 We ne'er had wept for Sopolis : but he  
 Dead on the waves now drifts ; while we must go  
 Past a void tomb, a mere name's mockery."

<sup>2</sup> "Here lapped in hallowed slumber Saon lies,  
 Asleep, not dead ; a good man never dies."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

"Thou wert the morning star among the living,  
 Ere thy fair light had fled ;  
 Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus giving  
 New splendour to the dead."—SHELLEY.

To Plato also is ascribed a fine monumental epigram upon the Eretrian soldiers who died at Ecbatana (i. 322):<sup>1</sup>—

οἶδε ποτ' Αἰγαίου βαρύβρομον οἶδμα λιπόντες  
 Ἐκβατάνων πεδίῳ κείμεθ' ἐνὶ μεσάτῳ.  
 χαίρε κλιτὴ ποτε πατρίς Ἐρέτρια· χαίρετ' Ἀθῆναι  
 γείτονες Εὐβοίης· χαίρε θάλασσα φίλη.

Erinna. Erinna's epitaph on Baucis (i. 409) deserves quotation, because it is one of the few pieces accepted by the later Greeks, but probably without due cause, as belonging to a girl whose elegiacs were rated by the ancients above Sappho's:<sup>2</sup>—

στᾶλαι καὶ Σειρῆνες ἐμαὶ καὶ πένθιμε κρωσσὲ  
 ὅστις ἔχεις Ἀῖδα τὰν ὀλίγαν σποδιὰν,  
 τοῖς ἐμὸν ἐρχομένουσι παρ' ἡρίον εἶπατε χαίρειν,  
 αἷτ' ἄστοι τελέθωντ' αἰθ' ἑτέρας πόλιος·  
 χῶτι με νύμφαν εἶσαν ἔχει τάφος εἶπατε καὶ τό·  
 χῶτι πατὴρ μ' ἐκάλει Βανκίδα χῶτι γένος  
 Τηνία, ὡς εἰδῶντι· καὶ ὅττι μοι ἄ συνεταιρὶς  
 Ἦριν' ἐν τύμβῳ γράμμ' ἐχάραξε τόδε.

Sappho. Sappho herself has left the following lament for the maiden Timas (i. 367):<sup>3</sup>—

Τιμίδος ᾗδε κόνις, τὰν δὴ πρὸ γάμοιο θανοῦσαν  
 ᾔεξατο Φερσεφόνιος κινάνεος θάλαμος,

<sup>1</sup> "We who once left the Ægean's deep-voiced shore,  
 Lie 'neath Ecbatana's champaign, where we fell.  
 Farewell, Eretria, thou famed land of yore,  
 And neighbour Athens, and loved sea, farewell."

<sup>2</sup> "Pillars of death, carved Sirens, tearful urns,  
 In whose sad keeping my poor dust is laid,  
 To him, who near my tomb his footsteps turns,  
 Stranger or Greek, bid hail; and say a maid  
 Rests in her bloom below; her sire the name  
 Of Baucis gave; her birth and lineage high;  
 And say her bosom friend Erinna came  
 And on this tomb engraved her elegy."—ELTON.

"This is the dust of Timas, whom unwed  
 Persephone locked in her darksome bed:

ὡς καὶ ἀποφθιμένας πᾶσαι νεοθᾶγι σιδάρω  
ἀλικες ἡμερτὰν κρατὸς ἔθεντο κόμαν.

In each of these epitaphs, the untimely fading of a flower-like maiden in her prime has roused the deepest feeling of the poetess. This indeed is the chord which rings most truly in the sepulchral lyre of the Greeks. Their most genuine sorrow is for youth cut off before the joys of life were tasted. This sentiment receives, perhaps, its most pathetic though least artistic expression in the following anonymous epitaph on a young man. The mother's love and anguish are set forth with a vividness which we should scarcely have expected from a Greek (i. 336):<sup>1</sup>—

The fading  
of youth.

νηλεὲς ὦ δαῖμον, τί δέ μοι καὶ φέγγος ἔδειξας  
εἰς ὀλίγων ἐτέων μέτρα μινυνθάδια;  
ἦ ἵνα λυπήσῃς δι' ἐμὴν βιότοιο τελευτήν  
μητέρα δειλαίην δάκρυσι καὶ στοναχαῖς,  
ἦ μ' ἔτεχ' ἦ μ' ἀτίτηλε καὶ ἦ πολὺ μείζονα πατρὸς  
φροντίδα παιδείης ἥνυσεν ἡμέτερης;  
ὃς μὲν γὰρ τυτθὸν τε καὶ ὄρφανὸν ἐν μεγάροις  
κάλλιπεν· ἦ δ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ πάντας ἔτλη καμάτων.  
ἦ μὲν ἐμοὶ φίλον ἦεν ἐφ' ἀγνῶν ἡγεμονίῳ  
ἐμπρεπέμεν μύθοις ἀμφὶ δικασπολίας·  
ἀλλὰ μοι οὐ γενύων ἐπέδεξατο κοῦριμον ἄνθος  
ἡλικίης ἐρατῆς, οὐ γάμον, οὐ δαΐδας·

For her, the maids who were her fellows shore  
Their curls and to her tomb this tribute bore."

- <sup>1</sup> "Merciless heaven! why didst thou show me light  
For so few years and speedy in their flight?  
Was it to vex by my untimely death  
With tears and wailings her who gave me breath?  
Who bore me, and who reared me, and who wrought  
More for my youth, with many a careful thought,  
Than my dead sire: he left me in his hall  
An orphan babe: 'twas she alone did all.  
My joy it was beneath grave men of laws,  
Just pleas to urge and win approved applause;  
But from my cheek she never plucked the flower  
Of charming youth, nor dressed my bridal bower,

οὐκ ἔμελλεν ἔσθ' ἐταλαιπώρην· ἢ τέως εἴδ',  
 ὑπὸ τῆς σὺ τοῖον λεγόμενῃ ἡμετέρῃ  
 τῆς Παιδαγωγίης· ἢ τε ἔτι με εἰς τὸν αἶον  
 ἐφ' ἧς Παιδείης τῶντος ἐξήμενον.  
 Φροντὸν γὰρ μέλει σὺ δουλοῦτο· ἢ τέως ταῦτα  
 ἡμετέρων· ἐπεὶ νῦν ὅλης οὕτως περὶ μένος

*Epitaphian  
 Dirge, and  
 later Greek  
 epitaphs.*

The common topic of consolation in these cases of untimely death is the one which Shakespeare has expressed in the Dirge for *Fidele*, and D'Urfey in his dirge for *Chrysostom* by these four lines :—

“Sleep, poor youth, sleep in peace,  
 Believed from love and mortal care ;  
 Whilst we that pine in life's disease,  
 Uncertain-blessed, less happy are.”

Lucian, speaking of a little boy who died at five years of age (i. 332), makes him cry :<sup>1</sup>—

ἀλλὰ με μὴ κλαίεις· καὶ γὰρ βιώτοιο μέτωπον  
 ταῖρον καὶ ταῖρων τῶν βιώτοιο κακῶν.

A little girl in another epitaph (i. 366) says to her father :<sup>2</sup>—

ἰσχεο λίπας,  
 Θεωῶτε· θνατοὶ πολλὰκι δυστυχέες.

A young man, dying in the prime of life, is even envied by *Agathias* (i. 384) :<sup>3</sup>—

ἔμψης ὀλβιος οἶτος, ὅς ἐν νεότητι μαρανθεῖς  
 ἐκφυγε τὴν βίοντος θάσσον ἀλιτροσύνην.

Nor sang my marriage hymn, nor saw, ah me !  
 My offspring shoot upon our ancient tree,  
 That now is withered. Even in the tomb  
 I wail Politta's woe, the gloom on gloom  
 That swells her grief for Phronton ; since a boy  
 In vain she bore, his country's empty joy.”

<sup>1</sup> “Nay, friend, bewail me not : 'tis true I had  
 Little of life, yet little of life's bad.”

<sup>2</sup> “Thy tears restrain,  
 Theodotus : life oft brings naught but pain.”

<sup>3</sup> “Yet was he blessed, who, withering in his prime,  
 Sooner escaped the smirch of life and time.”

But it is not often that we hear in the Greek Anthology a strain of such pure and Christian music as this apocryphal epitaph on Proté :<sup>1</sup>—

οἶκ' ἔθανες, Πρώτη, μετέβης δ' ἐς ἀμείνονα χῶρον,  
καὶ ναίεις μακάρων νήσους θαλίῃ ἐνι πολλῇ,  
ἔνθα κατ' Ἑλισίων πεδίων σκιρτῶσα γέγηθας  
ἄνθεςιν ἐν μαλακοῖσι, κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων·  
οὐ χειμῶν λυπεῖ σ', οὐ καῦμ', οὐ νοῦσος ἐνοχλεῖ,  
οὐ πεινῆς, οὐ δίψος ἔχει σ'· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ποθεινὸς  
ἀνθρώπων ἐτι σοι βίωτος· ζῶεις γὰρ ἀμέμπτως  
αἰγῶις ἐν καθαρίσιν Ὀλύμπου πλήσιον ὄντος.

Death at sea touched the Greek imagination with peculiar <sup>Death at sea.</sup> vividness. That a human body should toss, unburied, un-  
honoured, on the waves, seemed to them the last indignity.  
Therefore the epitaphs on Satyrus (i. 348), who exclaims :<sup>2</sup>—

κείνῳ διήεντι καὶ ἀτρυγέτῳ ἔτι κεῖμαι  
ἴδατι μαινομένῳ μεμφόμενος Βορέη,

and on Lysidiké (i. 328), of whom Zenocritus writes :<sup>3</sup>—

χαῖταί σου στάζουσιν ἔθ' ἄλμυρά δύσμορε κούρη  
ναυηγὲ φθιμένης εἰν ἀλὶ Λυσιδίκῃ.

<sup>1</sup> "Thou art not dead, my Proté! thou art flown  
To a far country better than our own ;  
Thy home is now an Island of the Blest ;  
There 'mid Elysian meadows take thy rest :  
Or lightly trip along the flowery glade,  
Rich with the asphodels that never fade !  
Nor pain, nor cold, nor toil, shall vex thee more,  
Nor thirst, nor hunger on that happy shore ;  
Nor longings vain (now that blest life is won)  
For such poor days as mortals here drag on ;  
To thee for aye a blameless life is given  
In the pure light of ever-present Heaven."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

<sup>2</sup> "Now lapped in billowy wastes of weltering seas,  
I curse the madness of the wild north breeze."

<sup>3</sup> "Thy hair still drops with brine of the salt sea ;  
Unhappy girl, shipwrecked Lysidiké !"

and on the three athletes who perished by shipwreck (i. 342), have a mournful wail of their own. Not very different, too, is the pathos of Therimachus struck by lightning (i. 306):<sup>1</sup>—

αὐτόμαται δαίλῃ ποτὶ ταῦτιον αἱ βόες ἦλθον  
 ἐξ ὄρεος πολλῇ νιφόμεναι χιόνι·  
 αἰαί, Θηρίμαχος δὲ παρὰ δρυὶ τὸν μακρὸν εὐδαι  
 ὕπνον· ἐκοιμήθη δ' ἐκ πυρὸς οὐρανόυ.

It is pleasant to turn from these to epitaphs which dwell more upon the qualities of the dead than the circumstances of their death. Here is the epitaph of a slave (i. 379):<sup>2</sup>—

Ζωσίμη ἢ πρὶν εἶδσα μόνῳ τῷ σώματι δοῦλη  
 καὶ τῷ σώματι νῦν εἶδρον ἐλευθερίην.

Here is a buffoon (i. 380):<sup>3</sup>—

Νηλεΐδης Ἀΐδης· ἐπὶ σοὶ δ' ἐγέλασσε θανόντι,  
 Τίτυρε, καὶ νεκρίων θῆκὴ σε μιμολόγον.

Forget me  
 never.

Perhaps the most beautiful of the sepulchral epigrams is one by an unknown writer, of which I here give a free paraphrase (*Anth. Pal.* vii. 346):—

“Of our great love, Parthenophil,  
 This little stone abideth still  
 Sole sign and token:  
 I seek thee yet, and yet shall seek,  
 Though faint mine eyes, my spirit weak  
 With prayers unspoken.

“Meanwhile, best friend of friends, do thou,  
 If this the cruel fates allow,

<sup>1</sup> “Home to their stalls at eve the oxen came  
 Down from the mountain through the snow-wreaths deep;  
 But ah, Therimachus sleeps the long sleep  
 'Neath yonder oak, lulled by the levin-flame.”

<sup>2</sup> “She who was once but in her flesh a slave  
 Hath for her flesh found freedom in the grave.”

<sup>3</sup> “Hades is stern; but when you died, he said,  
 Smiling, ‘Be jester still among the dead.’”

By death's dark river,  
Among those shadowy people, drink  
No drop for me on Lethe's brink :  
Forget me never !

Of all the literary epitaphs by far the most interesting are those written for the poets, historians, and philosophers of Greece. Reserving these for separate consideration I pass now to mention a few which belong as much to the pure epigram as to the epitaph. When, for example, we read two very clever poems on the daughters of Lycambes (i. 339), two again on a comically drunken old woman (i. 340, 360) and five on a man who has been first murdered and then buried by his murderer (i. 340), we see that, though the form of the epitaph has been adopted, clever rhetoricians, anxious only to display their skill, have been at work in rivalry. Sardanapalus, the eponym of Oriental luxury, furnishes a good subject for this style of composition. His epitaph runs thus in the Appendix Planudea (ii. 532):<sup>1</sup>—

Literary and  
rhetorical  
epitaphs.

On Sardana-  
palus.

εὖ εἰδὼς ὅτι θνητὸς ἔφυς, τὸν θυμὸν ἄεξε  
τερπόμενος θαλίῃσι· θανόντι σοι οὐτίς ὄνησις·  
καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ σποδὸς εἰμι, Νίνου μεγάλης βασιλεύσας.  
τόσσ' ἔχω ὅσος ἔφαγον καὶ ἐφίβρισα, καὶ μετ' ἔρωτος  
τέρπν' ἐδάην· τὰ δὲ πολλὰ καὶ ὀλβία κείνα λείπεται.  
ἦδε σοφὴ βιότοιο παραινέσις ἀνθρώποισιν.

We find only the fourth and fifth lines among the sepulchral epigrams of the Anthology of Cephalas (i. 334), followed by a clever parody composed by the Theban Crates. Demetrius, the Spartan coward, is another instance of this rhetorical

<sup>1</sup> " Know well that thou art mortal : therefore raise  
Thy spirit high with long luxurious days.  
When thou art dead, thou hast no pleasure then.  
I too am earth, who was a king of men  
O'er Nineveh. My banquets and my lust  
And love-delights are mine e'en in the dust ;  
But all those great and glorious things are flown.  
True doctrine for man's life is this alone."

On Demetrius the Spartan.

exercise. Among the two or three which treat of him I quote the following (i. 317) :<sup>1</sup>—

ἀνὶκ' ἀπὸ πτολέμου τρέσσαντά σε δέξατο μάτηρ,  
πάντα τὸν ὀπλιωτὰν κόσμον ὀλωλεκότα,  
αὐτὰ τοι φονίαν, Δαμάτριε, αἰτίκα λόγχαν  
εἶπε διὰ πλατέων ὤσαμένα λαγόνων·  
κάτθανε, μῆδ' ἐχέτω Σπάρτα ψόγον· οὐ γὰρ ἐκεῖνα!  
ἤμπλακεν, εἰ δειλοὺς τοῖμδ' ἐθρεψε γάλα.

On Lais. Agathias writes a very characteristic elegy on Lais (i. 315) :<sup>2</sup>—

ἔρπων εἰς Ἑφύρην τάφον ἔδρακον ἀπφὶ κέλευθον  
Λαΐδος ἀρχαίης, ὡς τὸ χάραγμα λέγει·  
δάκρυ δ' ἐπισπείσας, χαίροις γύναι, ἐκ γὰρ ἀκουῆς  
οἰκτείρω σέ γ, ἔφην, ἦν πάρος οἶκ ἰδόμην·  
ἂ πόσον ἡϊθέων νόον ἤκαχες· ἀλλ' ἶδε Λήθην  
ναίεις, ἀγλαίην ἐν χθονὶ κατθεμένη.

An epitaph on the inutility of epitaphs is an excellent novelty, especially when the witty poet (Paulus Silentarius) has the humour to make the ghost eager to speak while the wayfarer is inattentive (i. 332) :<sup>3</sup>—

οὐνομά μοι. τί δὲ τοῦτο ; πατρίς δέ μοι. ἐς τί δὲ τοῦτο ;  
κλεινοῦ δ' εἰμὶ γένους. εἰ γὰρ ἀφαιρωτάτου ;

<sup>1</sup> "When homeward cowering from the fight you ran  
Without or sword or shield, a naked man,  
Your mother then, Demetrius, through your side  
Plunged her blood-drinking spear, nor wept, but cried :  
Die ; let not Sparta bear the blame ; for she  
Sinned not, if cowards drew their life from me !"

<sup>2</sup> "Travelling to Ephyré, by the road-side  
The tomb and name of Lais I espied :  
I wept and said : ' Hail, queen, the fame of thee,  
Though ne'er I saw thee, draws these tears from me ;  
How many hearts for thee were broken, how  
By Lethe lustreless thou liest now !"

<sup>3</sup> "My name, my country—what are they to thee ?  
What, whether base or proud my pedigree ?  
Perhaps I far surpassed all other men ;



ζήσας δ' ἐνδόξως ἔλιπον βίον. εἰ γὰρ ἀδόξως ;  
 κείμαι δ' ἐνθάδε νῦν. τίς τίνι ταῦτα λέγεις ;

The value of the epitaphs on poets and great men of Greece is this—that, besides being in many cases of almost perfect beauty, they contain the quintessence of ancient criticism. Every epithet is carefully so chosen as to express what the Greeks thought peculiar and appropriate to the spirit and the works of their heroes. Orpheus is the subject of the following exquisite elegy by Antipater of Sidon (i. 274) :<sup>1</sup>—

Antique  
criticism in  
verse.

On Orpheus.

οὐκέτι θελγομένης, Ὀρφεῦ, δρίας, οὐκέτι πέτρας  
 ἄξεις, οὐ θηρῶν αἰτονόμονας ἀγέλας·  
 οὐκέτι κοιμάσεις ἀνέμων βρόμον, οὐχὶ χάλαζαν,  
 οἱ νιφετῶν συρμούς, οὐ παταγεύσαν ἅλα.  
 ὦλεο γάρ· σέ δὲ πολλὰ κατωδίραντο θίγατρες  
 Μναμοσύνας, μάτηρ δ' ἔξοχα Καλλιόπα·  
 τί φθιμένοις στοναχεῖμεν ἐφ' ῥιάσιν, ἀνίκ' ἀλαλκεῖν  
 τῶν παίδων Ἀἰδῶν οὐδὲ θεοῖς δύναμεις ;

Sophocles receives a gift of flowers and ivy, and quiet sleep from Simmias the Theban (i. 277) :<sup>2</sup>—

On  
Sophocles.

ἡρέμ' ὑπὲρ τίμβοιο Σοφοκλέος, ἡρέμα, κισσέ,  
 ἐρπίζοις, χλοερὸν ἐκπροχέων πλοκάμους,

Perhaps I fell below them all ; what then ?  
 Suffice it, stranger ! that thou see'st a tomb ;  
 Thou know'st its use ; it hides—no matter whom."

W. COWPER.

- <sup>1</sup> "Orpheus ! No more the rocks, the woods no more,  
 Thy strains shall lure ; no more the savage herds,  
 Nor hail, nor driving clouds, nor tempest's roar,  
 Nor chafing billows list thy lulling words ;  
 For thou art dead : and all the muses mourn,  
 But most Calliope, thy mother dear.  
 Shall we then, reft of sons, lament forlorn,  
 When e'en the Gods must for their offspring fear !"

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

- <sup>2</sup> "Wind, gentle evergreen, to form a shade  
 Around the tomb where Sophocles is laid ;  
 Sweet ivy, wind thy boughs, and intertwine  
 With blushing roses and the clustering vine :

καὶ πέταλον πάντη θάλλοι ῥόδου, ἣ τε φιλοῦρῶς  
 ἄμπελος, ἔγρ' ἀ περίξ κλήματα χεναμένη,  
 εἶνεκεν εὐπέιης πινιτύφρονος, ἣν ὁ μελιχρὸς  
 ἤσκησεν Μοισῶν ἄμμιγα καὶ Χαρίτων.

On  
Euripides.

Among the nine epitaphs on Euripides none is more delicate than the following by Ion (i. 282):<sup>1</sup>—

χαῖρε μελαμπετάλοις, Εὐριπίδῃ, ἐν γνάλοισι  
 Πιερίας τὸν αἰὲ νικτὸς ἔχων θάλαμον·  
 ἴσθι δ' ἰπὸ χθονὸς ὦν, ὅτι σοι κλέος ἀφθιτον ἔσται  
 ἴσον Ὀμηρείαις ἀενάοις χάρισιν.

Where could a poet be better lulled to rest than among the black-leaved hollows of Pieria? But the most touching tribute to Euripides is from the pen of a brother dramatist, the comic poet Philemon (ii. 94):<sup>2</sup>—

εἰ ταῖς ἀληθείαισιν οἱ τεθνηκότες  
 αἰσθησιν εἶχον, ἄνδρες ὥς φασίν τινες,  
 ἀπηγξάμην ἂν ὥστ' ἰδεῖν Εὐριπίδην.

On Aristophanes.

Aristophanes is praised by Antipater of Thessalonica (ii. 37) as the comic poet who laughed and hated rightly:—

κωμικὴ καὶ στίξας ἄξια καὶ γελάσας.

His plays are characterised as full of fearful graces (*φοβερῶν*

Thus will thy lasting leaves, with beauties hung,  
 Prove grateful emblems of the lays he sung:  
 Whose soul, exalted like a God of wit,  
 Among the Muses and the Graces writ."

*Anon.*

<sup>1</sup> "Hail, dear Euripides, for whom a bed  
 In black-leaved vales Pierian is spread:  
 Dead though thou art, yet know thy fame shall be  
 Like Homer's green through all eternity."

<sup>2</sup> "If it be true that in the grave the dead  
 Have sense and knowledge, as some men assert,  
 I'd hang myself to see Euripides."

πληθόμενοι χαρίτων). Over the grave of Anacreon, who On  
Anacreon. receives more tributes of this kind than any other poet, roses are to bloom, and wine is to be poured, and the thoughts of Smerdis, Bathyllus, and Megistias are to linger. Antipater of Sidon in particular paid honour to his grave (i. 278):<sup>1</sup>—

θάλλοι τετρακόρυμβος, 'Ανάκρεον, ἀμφὶ σὲ κισσὸς  
 ἄβρά τε λειμώνων πορφυρέων πέταλα·  
 πηγαὶ δ' ἀργινόεντος ἀναθλίβονται γάλακτος,  
 εὐώδες δ' ἀπὸ γῆς ἡδὺ χέοιτο μέθῃ,  
 ὄφρα κέ τοι σποδιῇ τε καὶ ὅστέα τέρψιν ἄρηται,  
 εἰ δὴ τις φθιμένοις χρίμπεται εὐφροσύνα,  
 ὦ τὸ φίλον στέρξας, φίλε, βάρβιτον, ὦ σὺν αἰοδῷ  
 πάντα διαπλώσας καὶ σὺν ἔρωτι βίον.

The same poet begins another epitaph thus:<sup>2</sup>—

τύμβος 'Ανακρείοντος· ὁ Τήϊος ἐνθάδε κύνος  
 εἶδει χῆ παιδῶν ζωροτάτη μανίῃ.

Less cheerful are the sepulchres of the satirists. We are

- <sup>1</sup> "Around the tomb, O bard divine !  
 Where soft thy hallowed brow reposes,  
 Long may the deathless ivy twine,  
 And summer pour his waste of roses !  
 "And many a fount shall there distil,  
 And many a rill refresh the flowers ;  
 But wine shall gush in every rill,  
 And every fount yield milky showers.  
 "Thus, shade of him whom nature taught  
 To tune his lyre and soul to pleasure,  
 Who gave to love his warmest thought,  
 Who gave to love his fondest measure ;  
 "Thus, after death, if spirits feel,  
 Thou may'st, from odours round thee streaming,  
 A pulse of past enjoyment steal  
 And live again in blissful dreaming."

T. MOORE.

- <sup>2</sup> "This is Anacreon's tomb : the Teian swan  
 Sleeps here ; life's fever and love's madness gone."

On  
Hipponax.

bidden not to wake the sleeping wasp upon the grave of Hipponax (i. 350):<sup>1</sup>—

ὦ ξεῖνε, φεύγε τὸν χαλαζεπῇ τάφον  
τὸν φρικτὸν Ἰππώνακτος, οὔτε χά τέφρα  
ἱαμβιάζει Βουπάλειον ἐς στίγος,  
μή πως ἐγείρης σφῆκα τὸν κοιμώμενον,  
ὅς οὐδ' ἐν ᾄῃ νῦν κεκοίμικεν χόλον,  
σκάζουσι μέτροις ὀρθὰ τοξεύσας ἔπη.

On Archi-  
lochus.

The same thought is repeated with even more of descriptive energy, in an epitaph on Archilochus (i. 287):<sup>2</sup>—

σῆμα τόδ' Ἀρχιλόχου παραπόντιον, ὅς ποτε πικρὴν  
μοῖσταν ἐχιδναίῳ πρῶτος ἔβαιψε χόλῳ,  
αἰμάξας Ἑλικῶνα τὸν ἡμερον· οἶδε Λυκάμβης  
μυρόμενος τρισσῶν ἄμματα θιγατέρων·  
ἡρέμα δὴ παράμειψον, ὁδοιπόρε, μή ποτε τοῦδε  
κινήσης τύμβῳ σφήκας ἐφεζομένους.

On  
Diogenes.

Diogenes offers similar opportunities for clever writing. The best of his epitaphs is this well-known but anonymous dialogue (i. 285):<sup>3</sup>—

εἰπέ, κύον, τίνας ἀνδρὸς ἐφεστῶς σῆμα φυλάσσεις;  
τοῦ Κυνός· ἀλλὰ τίς ἦν οὗτος ἀνὴρ ὁ Κύνων;

<sup>1</sup> "Stranger, beware! This grave hurls words like hail:  
Here dwells the dread Hipponax, dealing bale.  
E'en 'mid his ashes, fretful, poisonous,  
He shoots Iambics at slain Bupalus.  
Wake not the sleeping wasp: for though he's dead.  
Still straight and sure his crooked lines are sped."

<sup>2</sup> "Here sleeps Archilochus by the salt sea;  
Who first with viper's gall the muse did stain,  
And bathed mild Helicon with butchery.  
Lycambes weeping for his daughters three  
Learned this. Pass then in silence: be not fain  
To stir the wasps that round his grave remain."

<sup>3</sup> "Tell me, good dog, whose tomb you guard so well?  
The Cynic's. True: but who that Cynic, tell."

Διογένης. γένος εἰπέ. Σινωπεύς. ὃς πίθον ᾤκει ;  
καὶ μάλα· νῦν δὲ θανὼν ἀστέρας οἶκον ἔχει.

The epitaphs on Erinna, who died when she was only nineteen, are charged with the thought which so often recurs when we reflect on poets like Chatterton untimely slain ;—what would not they have done, if they had lived ? (i. 275) : <sup>1</sup>—

On Erinna  
and Sappho.

ὁ γλυκὺς Ἡρίνης οἶτος πόνος, οὐχὶ πολλὸς μὲν  
ὥς ἂν παρθενικᾶς ἐννεακαιδεκέτεις,  
ἀλλ' ἑτέρων πολλῶν δυνατώτερος· εἰ δ' Ἀΐδας οἱ  
μὴ ταχὺς ἦλθε, τίς ἂν ταλίκον ἔσχ' ὄνομα ;

Sappho rouses a louder strain of celebration (i. 276) : <sup>2</sup>—

Σαπφώ τοι κεύθεις χθὼν Αἰολὶ τὰν μετὰ Μοῖσαις  
ἀθανάταις θνατὰν Μοῦσαν ἀειδομένην,  
ἂν Κίπρις καὶ Ἔρως σὺν ἅμ' ἔτραφον, ἃς μέτα Πειθῷ  
ἔπλεκ' ἀείζων Πιερίδων στέφανον,  
'Ελλάδι μὲν τέρψιν, σοὶ δὲ κλέος· ὃ τριμέλικτον  
Μοῖραι δινεῦσαι νῆμα κατ' ἡλακάτας,  
πῶς οὐκ ἐκλώσασθε πανάφθιτον ἡμᾶρ ἀοιδῷ  
ἄφθιτα μῆσαμένῃ δῶρ' Ἑλικωνιάδων ;

Diogenes, of fair Sinope's race.

What ! He that in a tub was wont to dwell ?

Yes : but the stars are now his dwelling place."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

- <sup>1</sup> "These are Erinna's songs : how sweet, though slight !—  
For she was but a girl of nineteen years :—  
Yet stronger far than what most men can write :  
Had Death delayed, whose fame had equalled hers ?"

- <sup>2</sup> "Does Sappho then beneath thy bosom rest,  
Æolian earth ! that mortal Muse confessed  
Inferior only to the choir above,  
That foster-child of Venus and of Love ;  
Warm from whose lips divine Persuasion came,  
Greece to delight, and raise the Lesbian name ?  
O ye, who ever twine the three-fold thread,  
Ye Fates, why number with the silent dead  
That mighty songstress, whose unrivalled powers  
Weave for the Muse a crown of deathless flowers ?"

FRANCIS HODGSON.

On Pindar.

That is the composition of Antipater of Sidon, who excels in this special style. Without losing either the movement or the passion of poetry, he is always delicate and subtle in his judgments. His epigrams on Pindar are full of fire (i. 280) : <sup>1</sup>—

Περικὰν σάλπιγγα, τὸν εἰαγέων βαρὴν ὕμνων  
χαλκευτὰν, κατέχει Πίνδαρον ἄδε κόνις,  
οὐ μέλος εἰσαΐων φθέγγαιό κεν, ὥς ποτε Μουσῶν  
ἐν Κάδμου θαλάμοις σμῆνος ἀνεπλάσατο.

The very quintessence of criticism is contained in the phrases *σάλπιγξ*, *χαλκευτάς* (clarion, forger of bronze). The Appendix Planudea (ii. 590) contains another epitaph on Pindar by Antipater, which for its beautiful presentation of two legends connected with his life deserves to be quoted : <sup>2</sup>—

νεβρείων ὁπόσον σάλπιγξ ὑπερίαχεν αὐλῶν,  
τόσπον ὑπὲρ πάσας ἔκραγε σείο χέλυσ·  
οὐδὲ μάτην ἀπαλοῖς περὶ χεῖλεσιν ἔσμος ἐκεῖνος  
ἔπλασε κηρόδετον, Πίνδαρε, σείο μέλι.  
μάρτυς ὁ Μαινάλιος κέρόεις θεὸς ὕμνον αἰέσας  
τὸν σέο καὶ νομίων λησάμενος δονάκων.

It is impossible to do justice to all these utterances on the early poets.—Æschylus (i. 281) : <sup>3</sup>—

ὁ τραγικὸν φῶνημα καὶ ὀφρυνόεσσαν αἰοιδὴν  
πυργώσας στιβαρῇ πρώτος ἐν εὐεπίῃ.

<sup>1</sup> "Pieria's clarion, he whose weighty brain  
Forged many a hallowed hymn and holy strain,  
Pindar, here sleeps beneath the sacred earth :  
Hearing his songs, a man might swear the brood  
Of Muses made them in their hour of mirth,  
What time round Cadmus' marriage-bed they stood."

<sup>2</sup> "As the war-trumpet drowns the rustic flute,  
So when your lyre is heard all strings are mute :  
Not vain the labour of those clustering bees  
Who on your infant lips spread honey-dew ;  
Witness great Pan who hymned your melodies,  
Pindar, forgetful of his pipes for you."

<sup>3</sup> "He who the tragic style, the lofty rhyme,  
Built high, first, firm, with eloquence sublime."

Alcman (i. 277) :<sup>1</sup>—

τὸν χαρίεντ' Ἀλκμᾶνα, τὸν ὑμνητῆρ' ὑμεναίων  
κύκνον, τὸν Μοισῶν ἄξια μελψάμενον.

On Æschylus,  
Alcman,  
Stesichorus,  
Ibycus.

Stesichorus (ii. 36) :<sup>2</sup>—

Ὅμηρικὸν ὅς τ' ἀπὸ ρεύμα  
ἔσπασας οἰκείοις, Στησίχορ', ἐν καμάτοις.

Ibycus (ii. 36) :<sup>3</sup>—

ἡδύ τε Πειθοῦς,  
Ἴβυκε, καὶ παίδων ἄνθος ἀμησάμενε.

Enough has been quoted to show the delicate and appreciative criticism of the later and lighter Greek poets for the earlier and grander. It is also consolatory to find that almost no unknown great ones are praised in these epigrams; whence we may conclude that the masterpieces of Greek literature are almost as numerous now as they were in the age of Nero. The philosophers receive their due meed of celebration. Plato can boast of two splendid anonymous epitaphs (i. 285) :<sup>4</sup>—

γαῖα μὲν ἐν κόλποις κρύπτει τόδε σῶμα Πλάτωνος,  
ψυχὴ δ' ἀθάνατον τάξιν ἔχει μακάρων.

and<sup>5</sup>—

αἰετὶ, τίπτε βέβηκας ὑπὲρ τάφον; ἢ τίνος, εἰπέ,  
ἀστερόεντα θεῶν οἶκον ἀποσκοπέεις;

<sup>1</sup> "Delightful Alcman, swan-like singer, sweet,  
Of hymeneal hymns for Muses meet."

<sup>2</sup> "And thou, Stesichorus, well-taught to lead  
Homer's broad river through thy lyric reed."

<sup>3</sup> "Ibycus, thou who, through song's meadow mowing,  
Repeatest persuasion and boys' bloom ablowing."

<sup>4</sup> "Earth in her breast hides Plato's dust: his soul  
The blest immortals in their ranks enrol."

<sup>5</sup> "Eagle! why soarest thou above the tomb?  
To what sublime and star-ypaven home  
Floatest thou?"

ψυχῆς εἰμὶ Πλάτωνος ἀποπταμένης ἐς Ὀλυμπον  
εἰκὼν· σῶμα δὲ γῇ γηγενὲς Ἀθθῆς ἔχει.

It is curious to find both Thucydides (ii. 119) and Lycophron (ii. 38) characterised by their difficulty.

Hortatory  
and gnomic  
epigrams.

Closely allied in point of subject to many of the epitaphs are the so-called hortatory epigrams, *ἐπιγράμματα προτρεπτικά*. These consist partly of advice to young men and girls to take while they may the pleasures of the moment, partly of wise saws and maxims borrowed from the Stoics and the Cynics, from Euripides and the comic poets. Lucian and Palladas are the two most successful versifiers in this style. Palladas, whose life falls in the first half of the fifth century, a Pagan who regarded with disgust the establishment of Christianity, attained by a style of "elegant mediocrity" to the perfection of proverbial philosophy in verse. When we remember that the works of Euripides, Menander, Philemon, Theophrastus, and the Stoics were mines from which to quarry sentiments about the conduct of life, we understand the general average of excellence below which he rarely falls and above which he never rises. Yet in this section, as in the others of the Anthology, some of the anonymous epigrams are the best. Here is one (ii. 251):<sup>1</sup>—

εἰς αἶδην ἰθεὺς κατήλυναι, εἴτ' ἀπ' Ἀθηνῶν  
στείχοις, εἴτε νέκυσ νίσσαι ἐκ Μερόης·  
μὴ σέ γ' ἀνιάτω πάτρις ἀποτῆλε θανόντα·  
πάντοθεν εἰς ὃ φέρων εἰς αἶδην ἄνεμος.

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I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,  
Ascending heaven : Athens does inherit  
His corpse below."

SHELLEY.

<sup>1</sup> "Straight is the way to Acheron,  
Whether the spirit's race is run  
From Athens or from Meroë:  
Weep not, far off from home to die;  
The wind doth blow in every sky,  
That wafts us to that doleful sea."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.



Here is another, which repeats the old proverb of the cup and the lip (ii. 257) :—

πολλὰ μεταξύ πέλει κύλικος καὶ χείλεος ἄκρον.

And another, on the difference between the leaders and the followers in the pomp of life (ii. 270) :—

πολλοί τοι νερθηκοφόροι παῖροι δέ τε βάκχοι.

"One Bacchus, but a crowd of Thyrses-bearers."

Equally without author's name is the following excellent prayer (ii. 271) :<sup>1</sup>—

Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ καὶ εὐχομένοις καὶ ἀνεύκτοις  
ἄμμι δίδου· τὰ δὲ λυγρὰ καὶ εὐχομένων ἀπερύκτοις.

Lucian gives the following good advice on the use of wealth (ii. 256) :<sup>2</sup>—

ὡς τεθνηξόμενος τῶν σῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀπόλαυε,  
ὡς δὲ βιωσόμενος φείδεο σῶν κτεάνων·  
ἔστι δ' ἀνὴρ σοφὸς οὗτος ὃς ἄμφω ταῦτα νοήσας  
φειδοῖ καὶ δαπάνῃ μέτρον ἐφηρμόσατο.

Agathias asks why we need fear death (ii. 264) :<sup>3</sup>—

τὸν θάνατον τί φοβεῖσθε, τὸν ἡσυχίης γενετῆρα,  
τὸν παύοντα νόσους καὶ πενίης ὁδύνας ;  
μοῦνον ἅπαξ θνητοῖς παραγίνεται, οὐδέ ποτ' αὐτὸν  
εἰδέν τις θνητῶν δεῖτερον ἐρχόμενον·

<sup>1</sup> "God, grant us good, whether or not we pray ;  
But e'en from praying souls keep bad away."

<sup>2</sup> "Your goods enjoy, as if about to die ;  
As if about to live, use sparingly.  
That man is wise, who, bearing both in mind,  
A mean, befitting waste and thrift, can find."

BURGESS.

<sup>3</sup> "Why shrink from Death, the parent of repose,  
The cure of sickness and all human woes ?  
As through the tribes of men he speeds his way,  
Once, and but once, his visit he will pay ;

αἱ δὲ νόσοι πολλαὶ καὶ ποικιλαι, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἄλλον  
ἐρχόμεναι θνητῶν καὶ μεταβαλλόμεναι.

Palladas and  
pessimism.

The remainder of my quotations from this section will all be taken from Paladas. Here is his version of the proverb attributed to Democritus that life's a stage (ii. 265):<sup>1</sup>—

σκηνὴ πᾶς ὁ βίος καὶ παίγνιον· ἡ μάθε παίζειν  
τὴν σπουδὴν μεταθεῖς ἡ φέρε τὰς ὁδούς.

Here, again, is the old complaint that man is Fortune's plaything (ii. 266):<sup>2</sup>—

παίγνιον ἔστι τύχης μερόπων βίος, οἰκτρός, ἀλήτης,  
πλούτου καὶ πενίης μεσσόθι ῥεμβόμενος.  
καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατάγουσα πάλιν σφαιρηδὸν ἀείρει,  
τοὺς δ' ἀπὸ τῶν νεφελῶν εἰς αἶδην κατάρχει.

Here again, but cadenced in Iambics, is the Flight of Time (ii. 266):<sup>3</sup>—

ὦ τῆς βραχείας ἡδονῆς τῆς τοῦ βίου·  
τὴν ὀξύντητα τοῦ χρόνου πενήσσετε·  
ἡμεῖς καθεζόμεθα καὶ κοιμώμεθα,  
μοχθοῦντες ἢ τρυφῶντες· ὁ δὲ χρόνος τρέχει,  
τρέχει καθ' ἡμῶν τῶν τάλαιπῶρων βροτῶν,  
φέρων ἐκάστου τῷ βίῳ καταστροφὴν.

---

Whilst pale diseases, harbingers of pain,  
Close on each other crowd—an endless train."

W. SHEPHERD.

<sup>1</sup> "All life's a scene, a jest: then learn to play,  
Dismissing cares, or bear your pains away."

<sup>2</sup> "This wretched life of ours is Fortune's ball;  
'Twixt wealth and poverty she bandies all:  
These, cast to earth, up to the skies rebound;  
These, tossed to heaven, come tumbling to the ground."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

<sup>3</sup> "O for the joy of life that disappears!—  
Weep then the swiftness of the flying years:  
We sit upon the ground and sleep away,  
Toiling or feasting; but time runs for aye,  
Runs a fell race against poor wretched man,  
Bringing for each the day that end his span."

The next epigram is literally bathed in tears (ii. 267):<sup>1</sup>—

δακρυχέων γενόμεν καὶ δακρύσας ἀποθνήσκω·  
 δάκρυσι δ' ἐν πολλοῖς τὸν βίον ἔδρον ὅλον.  
 ὦ γένος ἀνθρώπων πολυδάκρυτον, ἀσθενές, οἰκτρὸν,  
 φαινόμενον κατὰ γῆς καὶ διαλυόμενον.

When he chooses to be cynical, Palladas can present the physical conditions of human life with a crude brutality which is worthy of a monk composing a chapter *De Contemptu humanæ miseriæ* (on the scorn of human wretchedness). It is enough to allude to the epigrams upon the birth (ii. 259) and the breath (ii. 265) of man. To this had philosophy fallen in the death of Greece. One more quotation from Palladas has a touch of pathos. The old order has yielded to the new: Theodosius has closed the temples: the Greeks are in ashes: their very hopes remain among the dead (ii. 268):<sup>2</sup>—

Ἑλληνές ἐσμεν ἄνδρες ἐσποδωμένοι,  
 νεκρῶν ἔχοντες ἐλπίδας τεθαμμένους·  
 ἀνεστράφη γὰρ πάντα νῦν τὰ πράγματα.

With this wail the thin lamentable voice of the dessicated rhetorician ceases.

Akin to these hortatory epigrams, in their tone of settled melancholy, are some of the satiric and convivial. It is necessary, when we think of the Greeks as the brightest and sunniest of all races, to remember what songs they sang at

Songs of  
 death at  
 drinking-  
 bouts.

<sup>1</sup> "Tears were my birth-right; born in tears,  
 In tears too must I die;  
 And mine has been, through life's long years,  
 A tearful destiny.

"Such is the state of man; from birth  
 To death all comfortless:  
 Then swept away beneath the earth  
 In utter nothingness."—EDWARD STOKES.

<sup>2</sup> "We Hellenes, we are men reduced to dust;  
 Our hopes are hopes of dead folk underground;  
 For now have all things upside-down been turned."

their banquets, and to comfort ourselves with the reflection that between their rose-wreaths and the bright Hellenic sky above them hung for them, no less than for ourselves, the cloud of death.

What more dismal drinking-song can be conceived than this? (i. 337):<sup>1</sup>—

οὐδὲν ἁμαρτήσας γενόμεν παρὰ τῶν με τεκόντων·  
 γεννηθεὶς δ' ὁ τάλας ἔρχομαι εἰς Ἀΐδην·  
 ὦ μῖξις γονέων θανατηφόρος· ὦ μοι ἀνάγκης  
 ἣ με προσπελάσει τῷ στυγερῷ θανάτῳ·  
 οὐδὲν ἐὼν γενόμεν· πάλιν ἔσσομαι ὡς πάρος οὐδέν·  
 οὐδὲν καὶ μηδὲν τῶν μερόπων τὸ γένος·  
 λοιπὸν μοι τὸ κύπελλον ἀποστίλβωσον, ἑταῖρε,  
 καὶ λύπης ἀκονὴν τὸν Βρόμιον πάρεχε.

The good sense of Cephalas placed it among the epitaphs; for in truth it is the quintessence of the despair of the grave. Yet its last couplet forces us to drag it from the place of tombs, and put it into the mouth of some late reveller of the decadence of Hellas. It has to my ear the ring of a drinking-song sung in a room with closed shutters, after the guests have departed, by some sad companion, who does not know that the dawn has gone forth, and the birds are aloft in the air. The shadow of night is upon him. Though Christ be risen and the sun of hope is in the sky, he is still as cheerless as Mimnermus. If space sufficed it would be both interesting and profitable to compare this mood of the epigrammatists with that expressed by Omar Khayyám, the Persian poet of Khorassán, in whose quatrains philosophy, melancholy, and

<sup>1</sup> "My sire begat me; 'twas no fault of mine:  
 But being born, in Hades I must pine:  
 O birth-act that brought death! O bitter fate  
 That drives me to the grave disconsolate!  
 To nought I turn, who nothing was ere birth;  
 For men are nought and less than nothing worth.  
 Then let the goblet gleam for me, my friend;  
 Pour forth care-soothing wine, ere pleasures end."

the sense of beauty are so wonderfully mingled that to surpass their pathos is impossible in verse.<sup>1</sup> Here is another of the same tone (ii. 287) :<sup>2</sup>—

Late Greek  
and Persian  
drinking-  
songs.

ἡὼς ἐξ ἡοῖς παραπέμπεται, εἴτ' ἀμελούντων  
ἡμῶν ἐξαίφνης ἦξει ὁ πορφύρεος,  
καὶ τοῖς μὲν τήξας, τοῖς δ' ὀπτήσας, ἐνίους δὲ  
φυσήσας, ἄξει πάντας ἐς ἐν βάραθρον.

And another with a more delicate ring of melancholy in the last couplet (ii. 289) :<sup>3</sup>—

ἰπνώεις ὦ ταῖρε · τὸ δὲ σκίφος αὐτὸ βοᾷ σε ·  
ἔγρεο, μὴ τέρπου μοιριδίῃ μελέτῃ ·  
μὴ φείσῃ Διόδωρε · λάβρος δ' εἰς Βάκχον ὀλισθὼν  
ἄχρῃς ἐπὶ σφαλεροῦ ζωροπότει γόνατος ·  
ἔσσεθ' ὅτ' οὐ πιόμεσθα, πολὺς πολὺς· ἀλλ' ἄγ' ἐπείγου.  
ἢ συνετὴ κροτάφων ἄπτεται ἡμετέρων.

And yet another (ii. 294),<sup>4</sup> which sounds like the Florentine Carnival Song composed by Lorenzo de' Medici :—

“Chi vuol esser lieto sia ;  
Di doman non è contezza :”

πῖνε καὶ εὐφραίνου · τί γὰρ αἴριον ἢ τί τὸ μέλλον  
οὐδείς γινώσκει · μὴ τρέχε, μὴ κοπία ·

<sup>1</sup> See Fitzgerald's faultless translation of the *Rubāiyāt* of Omar Khayyām, published by Quaritch.

<sup>2</sup> “Morn follows morn ; till while we careless play  
Comes suddenly the darksome king, whose breath  
Or wastes or burns or blows our life away,  
But drives us all down to one pit of death.”

<sup>3</sup> “Thou sleepest, friend : but see, the beakers call !  
Awake, nor dote on death that waits for all.  
Spare not, my Diodorus, but drink free  
Till Bacchus loose each weak and faltering knee.  
Long will the years be when we can't carouse—  
Long, long : up then ere age hath touched our brows.”

<sup>4</sup> “Drink and be merry. What the morrow brings  
No mortal knoweth : wherefore toil or run !

ὥς δύνασαι, χάρισαι, μετάδος, φάγε, θνητὰ λογίζου·  
 τὸ ζῆν τοῦ μὴ ζῆν οὐδὲν ὅλως ἀπέχει·  
 πᾶς ὁ βίος τοιόσδε ῥοπή μόνον· ἂν προλάβῃς σοῦ,  
 ἂν δὲ θάνῃς ἑτέρον πάντα· σὺ δ' οὐδὲν ἔχεις.

Satirical  
epigrams—  
Lucillius.

But the majority of the ἐπιγράμματα σκωπτικά, or jesting epigrams, are not of this kind. They are written for the most part, in Roman style, on ugly old women, misers, stupid actors, doctors to dream of whom is death, bad painters, poets who kill you with their elegies, men so light that the wind carries them about like stubble, or so thin that a gossamer is strong enough to strangle them; vices, meannesses, deformities of all kinds. Lucillius, a Greek Martial of the age of Nero, is both best and most prolific in this kind of composition. But of all the sections of the Anthology this is certainly the least valuable. The true superiority of Greek to Latin literature in all its species is that it is far more a work of pure beauty, of un-mixed poetry. In Lucillius the Hellenic muse has deigned for once to assume the Roman toga, and to show that if she chose, she could rival the hoarse-throated satirists of the empire on their own ground. But she has abandoned her lofty eminence, and descended to a lower level. The same may be said in brief about the versified problems and riddles (ii. pp. 467-490), which are not much better than elegant acrostics of this or the last century. It must, however, be remarked that the last-mentioned section contains a valuable collection of Greek oracles.

Meleager of  
Gadara.

Of all the amatory poets of the Anthology, by far the noblest is Meleager. He was a native of Gadara in Palestine, as he tells us in an epitaph composed in his old age:—

---

Spend while thou mayst, eat, fix on present things  
 Thy hopes and wishes: life and death are one.  
 One moment: grasp life's goods; to thee they fall:  
 Dead, thou hast nothing, and another all."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

πάτρα δέ με τεκνοῖ  
 Ἄτθις ἐν Ἀσσυρίοις ναιομένα, Γάδαρα.<sup>1</sup>

It is curious to think of this town, which from our childhood we have connected with the miracle of the demoniac and the swine, as a Syrian Athens, the birthplace of the most mellifluous of all erotic songsters. Meleager's date is half a century or thereabouts before the Christian era. He therefore was ignorant of the work and the words of one who made the insignificant place of his origin world-famous. Of his history we know really nothing more than his own epigrams convey; the two following couplets from one of his epitaphs record his sojourn during different periods of his life at Tyre and at Ceos:—

ὄν θεόπαις ἦνδρωσε Τύρος Γαδάρων θ' ἱερὰ χθών·  
 Κῶς δ' ἐρατὴ Μερόπων πρὸς βυν ἐγηροτρόφει.  
 Ἄλλ' εἰ μὲν Σύρος ἔσσι, Σάλαμ' εἰ δ' οὖν σύγ'ε Φοῖνιξ,  
 Ναΐδιος · εἰ δ' Ἑλλην, χαίρει · τὸ δ' αὐτὸ φράσον.<sup>2</sup>

This triple salutation, coming from the son of Gadara and Tyre and Ceos, brings us close to the pure humanity which distinguished Meleager. Modern men, judging him by the standard of Christian morality, may feel justified in flinging a stone at the poet who celebrated his Muisco and his Diocles, his Heliodora and his Zenophila, in too voluptuous verse. But those who are content to criticise a pagan by his own rule of right and wrong, will admit that Meleager had a spirit of the subtlest and the sweetest, a heart of the tenderest, and a genius of the purest that has been ever granted to an elegist of earthly love. While reading his verse, it is impossible to avoid laying down the book and pausing to exclaim: How modern is the phrase, how true the passion, how unique the

<sup>1</sup> "The country that gave birth to me is Gadara, an Attic city on Assyrian shores."

<sup>2</sup> "Who grew to man's estate in Tyre and Gadara, and found a fair old age in Cos. If then thou art a Syrian, Salaam! if a Phœnician, Naidios! if a Hellene, Hail!"

style! Though Meleager's voice has been mute a score of centuries, it yet rings clear and vivid in our ears; because the man was a real poet, feeling intensely, expressing forcibly and beautifully, steeping his style in the fountain of tender sentiment which is eternal. We find in him none of the cynicism which defiles Straton, or of the voluptuary's despair which gives to Agathias the morbid splendour of decay, the colours of corruption. All is simple, lively, fresh with joyous experience in his verse.

Rare  
qualities of  
style.

The first great merit of Meleager as a poet is limpidity. A crystal is not more transparent than his style; but the crystal to which we compare it must be coloured with the softest flush of beryl or of amethyst. Here is a little poem in praise of Heliodora (i. 85):<sup>1</sup>—

πλέξω λευκόιον, πλέξω δ' ἀπαλὴν ἄμα μύρτοις  
νάρκισσον, πλέξω καὶ τὰ γελῶντα κρίνα,  
πλέξω καὶ κρόκον ἡδὴν· ἐπιπλέξω δ' ὑάκινθον  
πορφυρέην, πλέξω καὶ φιλέραστα ῥόδα,  
ὥς ἂν ἐπὶ κροτάφοις μυροβοστρίχον Ἡλιοδώρας  
εὐπλόκαμον χυίτην ἀνθοβολῇ στέφανος.

Nothing can be more simple than the expression, more exquisite than the cadence of these lines. The same may be said about the elegy on Clearisté (i. 307):<sup>2</sup>—

οὐ γάμον ἀλλ' Ἀῖδαν ἐπινυμφίδιον Κλεαρίστα  
δέξατο, παρθενίας ἄμματα λινομένα·

---

"I'll twine white violets, and the myrtle green;  
Narcissus will I twine, and lilies sheen;  
I'll twine sweet crocus, and the hyacinth blue;  
And last I twine the rose, love's token true:  
That all may form a wreath of beauty, meet  
To deck my Heliodora's tresses sweet."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

<sup>2</sup> "Poor Clearisté loosed her virgin zone  
Not for her wedding, but for Acheron;



ἄρτι γὰρ ἐσπέριοι νύμφας ἐπὶ δικλίσιν ἄχεν  
 λωτοὶ καὶ θαλάμων ἐπλαταγεῦντο θύραι·  
 ἡφοὶ δ' ὀλολυγμὸν ἀνέκραγον, ἐκ δ' Ὑμέναιος  
 σιγαθεὶς γοερὸν φθέγμα μεθαρμόσατο·  
 αἱ δ' αὐταὶ καὶ φέγγος ἔδαδον· χοὺν παρὰ παστῆ  
 πεῦκαι, καὶ φθιμένα νέρθεν ἔφαινον ὁδόν.

The thought of this next epigram recalls the song to Ageanax in Theocritus' seventh Idyll (ii. 402):<sup>1</sup>—

οὔριος ἐμπνεύσας ναίταις Νότος, ὦ δυσέρωτες,  
 ἦμισυ μὲν ψυχᾶς ἄρπασεν Ἀνδράγαθον·  
 τρὶς μάκαρες νᾶες, τρὶς δ' ὄλβια κήματα πόντου,  
 τετράκι δ' εὐδαίμων παιδοφορῶν ἄνεμος·  
 εἴθ' εἶην δελφὶς ἴν' ἐμοῖς βαστακτὺς ἐπ' ὤμοις  
 πορθμευθεὶς ἐσίδῃ τὰν γλυκίπαιδα Ῥύδον.

These quotations are sufficient to set forth the purity of Meleager's style, though many more examples might have been borrowed from his epigrams on the cicada, on the mosquitoes who tormented Zenophila, on Antiochus, who would have been Erôs if Erôs had worn the boy's petasos and chlamys. The next point to notice about him is the suggestiveness of his language, his faculty of creating the right epithets and turning the perfect phrase that suits his meaning. The

Command of  
language.

'Twas but last eve the merry pipes were swelling,  
 And dancing footsteps thrilled the festive dwelling;  
 Morn changed those notes for wailings loud and long,  
 And dirges drowned the hymeneal song;  
 Alas! the very torches meant to wave  
 Around her bridal couch, now light her to the grave!"

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

<sup>1</sup> "Fair blows the breeze: the seamen loose the sail:—  
 O men that know not love, your favouring gale  
 Steals half my soul, Andragathos from me!  
 Thrice lucky ships, and billows of the sea  
 Thrice blessed, and happiest breeze that bears the boy!  
 O would I were a dolphin that my joy,  
 Here on my shoulders ferried, might behold  
 Rhodes, the fair island thronged with boys of gold!"

fragrance of the second line in this couplet is undefinable but potent :<sup>1</sup>—

ὃ δισέρως ψυχὴ παῦσαί ποτε καὶ δι' ὀνείρων  
εἰδώλοις κάλλεος κωφὰ χλαιομένη.

It is what all day-dreamers and castle-builders, not to speak of the dreamers of the night, must fain cry out in their despair. The common motive of a lover pledging his absent mistress is elevated to a region of novel beauty by the passionate repetition of words in this first line :<sup>2</sup>—

ἔγχει καὶ πάλιν εἰπὲ πάλιν πάλιν Ἑλιωδώρας.

In the same way a very old thought receives new exquisiteness in the last couplet of the epitaph on Heliodora :<sup>3</sup>—

ἀλλά σε γονοῦμαι Γᾶ παντρόφε τὰν πανόδυρτον  
ἡρέμα σοῖς κόλποις μῆτερ ἐναγκάλισαι.

The invocation to Night, which I will next quote, has its own beauty derived from the variety of images which are subtly and capriciously accumulated :<sup>4</sup>—

ἐν τόδε παμμήτειρα θεῶν λίτομαί σε φίλη Νύξ.  
ναὶ λίτομαι κώμων σύμπλατε πότνια Νύξ.

Treatment  
of Love.

But Meleager's epithets for Love are perhaps the triumphs of his verbal coinage :<sup>5</sup>—

ἔστι δ' ὁ παῖς γλυκύδακρυς αἰέταλος ὠκὺς ἀταρβής  
σιμὰ γελῶν πτερόεις νῶτα φαρετροφόρος.

<sup>1</sup> "O soul too loving, cease at length from even in dreams thus idly basking in the warmth of beauty's empty shapes."

<sup>2</sup> "Pour forth ; and again cry, again, and yet again, 'To Heliodora !'"

<sup>3</sup> "I pray thee, Earth, all-nourishing, in thy deep breast, O mother, to enfold her tenderly, for whom my tears must flow for aye."

<sup>4</sup> "This one boon I ask of thee, great mother of all gods, beloved Night ! Nay, I beseech thee, thou fellow wanderer with revelry, O holy Night !"

<sup>5</sup> "The boy is honey-teared, tireless of speech, swift, without sense of fear, with laughter on his roguish lips, winged, bearing arrows in a quiver on his shoulders."

Again he calls him *ἀβροπέδιλος ἔρως* (delicate-sandalled Love) and fashions words like *ψυχαπάτης, ύπναπάτης* (soul-cheating and sleep-cheating), to express the qualities of the treacherous god. In some of his metaphorical descriptions of passion he displays a really fervid imagination. To this class of creation belong the poem on the soul's thirst (ii. 414), on the memory of beauty that lives like a fiery image in the heart (ii. 413), and the following splendid picture of the tyranny of love. He is addressing his soul, who has once again incautiously been trapped by Erós: <sup>1</sup>—

τί μάτην ἐνὶ δεσμοῖς  
σπαίρεις ; αὐτὸς ἔρως τὰ πτερά σου δέδεκεν  
καὶ σ' ἐπὶ πῦρ ἔστησε, μύροις δ' ἔβρανε λιπόπνουν,  
δῶκε δὲ διψώσῃ δάκρυα θερμὰ πιεῖν.

Surely a more successful marriage of romantic fancy to classic form was never effected even by a modern poet. This line again contains a bold and splendid metaphor: <sup>2</sup>—

κωμάζω δ' οἶκ οἶνον ὑπὸ φρένα πῆρ δὲ γεμισθείς.

Meleager had a soul that inclined to all beautiful and tender things. Having described the return of spring in a prolonged chant of joy, he winds up with words worthy of a Troubadour or Minnesinger in the April of a new age: <sup>3</sup>—

Exquisite  
conceits.

πῶς οἱ χρεὶ καὶ αἰοδῶν ἐν εἵαρι καλὸν αἰῶσαι ;

The cicada, *δροσεραῖς σταγόνεσσι μεθυσθείς* (drunken with honey-drops of dew), the *αὐτοφυὲς μίμημα λύρας* (nature's own mimic of the lyre)—a conceit by the way in the style of

<sup>1</sup> "Why vainly in thy bonds thus pant and fret? Love himself bound thy wings and set thee on a fire, and rubbed thee, when thy breath grew faint, with myrrh, and when thou thirstedst, gave thee burning tears to drink."

<sup>2</sup> "A reveller I go freighted with fire not wine beneath the region of my heart."

<sup>3</sup> "How could it be that poet also should not sing fair songs in spring?"

Marini or of Calderon—the bee whom he addresses as *ἀνθο-  
δίαυτε μέλισσα* (flower-pasturing bee), and all the flowers for  
which he has found exquisite epithets, the *φίλομβρος νάρ-  
κισσος* (narcissus that loves the rain of heaven), the *φιλ-  
έραστα ῥόδα* (roses to lovers dear), the *οὔρεσίφοιτα κρίνα*  
(lilies that roam the mountain sides), and again *τὰ γελῶντα  
κρίνα* (laughing lilies), testify to the passionate love and to  
the purity of heart with which he greeted and studied the  
simplest beauties of the world.<sup>1</sup> In dealing with flowers he is  
particularly felicitous. Most exquisite are the lines in which  
he describes his garland of the Greek poets and assigns to each  
some favourite of the garden or the field, and again those other  
couplets which compare the boys of Tyre to a bouquet culled  
by love for Aphrodite. *Βαῖα μὲν ἀλλὰ ῥόδα* (slight things  
perhaps, but roses): these are the words in which Meleager  
describes the too few but precious verses of Sappho, and for  
his own poetry they have a peculiar propriety. *Τεαὶ ζῶουσιν  
ἀηδόνες* (thy nightingales still live) we may say, quoting  
Callimachus, when we take leave of him. His poetry has the  
sweetness and the splendour of the rose, the rapture and full-  
throated melody of the nightingale.

Straton of  
Sardis.

Next in artistic excellence to Meleager among the amatory  
poets is Straton, a Greek of Sardis, who lived in the second  
century. But there are few readers who, even for the sake of  
his pure and perfect language, will be prepared to tolerate  
the immodesty of his subject-matter. Straton is not so  
delicate and subtle in style as Meleager; but he has a mascu-  
line vigour and *nettelé* of phrase peculiar to himself. It is not  
possible to quote many of his epigrams. He suffers the

<sup>1</sup> Those who on the shores of the Mediterranean have traced out beds  
of red tulips or anemones or narcissus from terrace to terrace, over rocks,  
and under olive branches, know how delicately true to nature is the  
thought contained in the one epithet *οὔρεσίφοιτα*—roaming like nymphs  
along the hills—now single and now gathered into companies, as though  
their own sweet will had led them wandering.

neglect which necessarily obscures those men of genius who misuse their powers. Yet the story of the garland-weaver (ii. 396), and the address to schoolmasters (ii. 219), are too clever to be passed by without notice.

The former of these pieces I have paraphrased, as follows :—

“To-day, when dawn was dim, I went  
    Before the garland-weaver's stall,  
And saw a boy whose beauty sent,  
    Like stars of autumn when they fall,  
An arrow of swift fire that left  
Glory upon the gloom it cleft.

“Roses he wove to make a wreath,  
    And roses were his cheeks and lips,  
And faintly flushed the flowers beneath  
    The roses of his finger-tips :  
He saw me stand in mute amaze,  
And rosy blushes met my gaze.

“‘O flower that weavest flowers,’ I said ;  
    ‘Fair crown, where myrtle-blossoms white  
Mingle with Cyprian petals red  
    For love's ineffable delight,  
Tell me what god or hero blest  
Shall bind thy garland to his breast :

“‘Or can it be that even I  
    Who am thy slave to save or slay,  
With price of prayers and tears may buy  
    Thy roses ere they fade away ?’  
He smiled, and deeper blushed, and laid  
One finger on his lips, and said :

“‘Peace, lest my father hear !’ then drew  
    A blossom from the crown, and pressed  
Its perfume to the pinks that blew  
    Upon the snow-wreath of his breast,  
And kissed, and gave the flower to be  
Sweet symbol of assent to me.

“Roses and wreaths with shy pretence,  
    As for a bridal feast, I bought ;

And veiling all love's vehemence  
 In languor, bade the flowers be brought !  
 To deck my chamber by the boy  
 Who brings therewith a better joy."

The following epigram on a picture of Ganymede gives a very fair notion of Straton's style (ii. 425):<sup>1</sup>—

στείχε πρὸς αἰθέρα δῖον, ἀπέρχεο παῖδα κομίζων,  
 αἰετὲ, τὰς διφνεῖς ἐκπετάσας πτέρυγας,  
 στείχε τὸν ἄβρὸν ἔχων Γανυμήδεα, μηδὲ μεθείης  
 τὸν Διὸς ἡδύστων οἶνοχόον κυλίκων·  
 φείδεο δ' αἰμάξαι κούρον γαμψώνυχι ταρσῇ  
 μὴ Ζεὺς ἀλγήσῃ τοῦτο βαρυνόμενος.

To this may be added an exhortation to pleasure in despite of death (ii. 288).<sup>2</sup>

**Callimachus.** Callimachus deserves mention as a third with Meleager and Straton. His style, drier than that of Meleager, more elevated than Straton's, is marked by a frigidity of good scholarship which only at intervals warms into the fire of passionate poetry. In writing epigrams Callimachus was careful to preserve the pointed character of the composition. He did not merely, as is the frequent wont of Meleager, indite a short poem in elegiacs. This being the case, his love poems, though they are many, are not equal to his epitaphs.

<sup>1</sup> "Soar upward to the air divine:  
 Spread broad thy pinions aquiline:  
 Carry amid thy plumage him,  
 Who fills Jove's beaker to the brim:  
 Take care that neither crookèd claw  
 Make the boy's thigh or bosom raw;  
 For Jove will wish thee sorry speed  
 If thou molest his Ganymede."

<sup>2</sup> "Drink now, and love, Democrates; for we  
 Shall not have wine and boys eternally:  
 Wreath we our heads, anoint ourselves with myrrh,  
 Others will do this to our sepulchre:  
 Let now my living bones with wine be drenched;  
 Water may deluge them when I am quenched."

To mention all the poets of the amatory chapters would be impossible. Their name is legion. Even Plato the divine, by right of this epigram to Aster :<sup>1</sup>—

Plato on  
Aster and  
Agathon.

ἀστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς ἀστήρ ἐμός· εἴθε γεινοίμην  
οὐρανὸς ὥς πολλοῖς ὄμμασιν εἰς σὲ βλέπω—

and of this to Agathon :<sup>2</sup>—

τὴν ψυχὴν Ἀγάθωνα φιλῶν ἐπὶ χεῖλεσιν ἔσχον·  
ἦλθε γὰρ ἡ τλήμων ὥς διαβησομένη—

takes rank in the erotic circle. Yet we may touch in passing on the names of Philodemus and Antipater, the former a native of Gadara, the latter a Sidonian, whose epitaph was composed by Meleager. Their poems help to complete the picture of Syrian luxury and culture in the cities of North Palestine, which we gain when reading Meleager. Of Philodemus the liveliest epigram is a dialogue, which seems to have come straight from the pages of some comedy (i. 68); but the majority of his verses belong to that class of literature which finds its illustration in the Gabinetto Segreto of the Neapolitan Museum. Occasionally he strikes a true note of poetry, as in this invocation to the moon :<sup>3</sup>—

Philodemus.

νυκτερινὴ δίκερως φιλοπάννουχε φαῖνε σελήνη,  
φαῖνε δι' εὐτρήτων βαλλομένη θυρίδων·

<sup>1</sup> "Gazing at stars, my star! I would that I were the welkin,  
Starry with infinite eyes, gazing for ever at thee!"

FREDERIC FARRAR.

<sup>2</sup> "Kissing Helena, together  
With my kiss, my soul beside it  
Came to my lips, and there I kept it,—  
For the poor thing had wandered thither,  
To follow where the kiss should guide it,  
Oh cruel I to intercept it!"—SHELLEY.

<sup>3</sup> "Shine forth, night-wandering, horned, and vigilant queen,  
Through the shy lattice shoot thy silver sheen ;

αὔγαξε χρυσέην Καλλίστιον· ἐς τὰ φιλεόντων  
 ἔργα κατοπτεῖεν οὐ φθόνος ἀθανάτη.  
 ὀλβίεις καὶ τήνδε καὶ ἡμέας οἶδα σελήνη·  
 καὶ γὰρ σὴν ψυχὴν ἔφλεγεν Ἐνδυμίων.

**Antipater.** Antipater shines less in his erotic poems than in the numerous epigrams which he composed on the earlier Greek poets, especially on Anacreon, Erinna, Sappho, Pindar, Ibycus. He lived at a period when the study of the lyrists was still flourishing, and each of his couplets contains a fine and thoughtful piece of descriptive criticism.

**Byzantine poets.** Another group of amatory poets must be mentioned. Agathias, Macedonius, and Paulus Silentarius, Greeks of Byzantium about the age of Justinian, together with Rufinus, whose date is not quite certain, yield the very last fruits of the Greek genius, after it had been corrupted by the lusts of Rome and the effeminacy of the East. Very pale and hectic are the hues which give a sort of sickly beauty to their style. Their epigrams vary between querulous lamentations over old age and death, and highly coloured pictures of self-satisfied sensuality. Rufinus is a kind of second Straton in the firmness of his touch, the cynicism of his impudicity. The complaint of Agathias to the swallows that twittered at his window in early dawn (i. 102), his description of Rhodanthé and the vintage feast (ii. 297),<sup>1</sup> and those lines in which he

Illume Callistion : for a goddess may  
 Gaze on a pair of lovers while they play.  
 Thou enviest her and me, I know, fair moon,  
 For thou didst once burn for Endymion."

<sup>1</sup> "We trod the brimming wine-press ankle-high,  
 Singing wild songs of Bacchic revelry :  
 Forth flowed the must in rills ; our cups of wood  
 Like cockboats swam upon the honeyed flood :  
 With these we drew, and as we filled them, quaffed,  
 With no warm Naiad to allay the draught :  
 But fair Rhodanthé bent above the press,  
 And the fount sparkled with her loveliness :



has anticipated Jonson's lyric on the kiss which made the wine within the cup inebriating (i. 107), may be quoted as fair specimens of his style. Of Paulus Silentarius I do not care to allude to more than the poem in which he describes the joy of two lovers (i. 106). What Ariosto and Boiardo have dwelt on in some of their most brilliant episodes, what Giorgione has painted in the eyes of the shepherd who envies the kiss given by Rachel to Jacob, is here compressed into eighteen lines of great literary beauty. But a man need be neither a prude nor a Puritan to turn with sadness and with loathing from these last autumnal blossoms on the tree of Greek beauty. The brothel and the grave are all that is left for Rufinus and his contemporaries. Over the one hangs the black shadow of death; the other is tenanted by ghosts of carnal joy:—

Rufinus and  
Paulus  
Silentarius.

“when lust,  
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,  
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,  
The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose  
The divine property of her first being.  
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp  
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres  
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,  
As loth to leave the body that it loved,  
And linked itself by carnal sensuality  
To a degenerate and degraded state.”<sup>1</sup>

Before taking leave of the erotic poets of the Anthology, I shall here insert a few translations made by me from Meleager, Straton, and some anonymous poets. The first epigram illustrates the Greek custom of going at night, after

We in our souls were shaken; yea, each man  
Quaked beneath Bacchus and the Paphian.  
Ah me! the one flowed at our feet in streams—  
The other fooled us with mere empty dreams!”

<sup>1</sup> *Comus*, 463, etc.

Revel-songs  
of Meleager.

drinking, with lighted torches to the house of the beloved person, and suspending garlands on the door. It is not easy to find an equivalent for the characteristic Greek word *κωμάζειν*. I have tried to deal with it by preserving the original allusion to the revel :—

“The die is cast ! Nay, light the torch !  
I’ll take the road ! Up, courage, ho !  
Why linger pondering in the porch ?  
Upon Love’s revel we will go.

“Shake off those fumes of wine ! Hang care  
And caution ! What has Love to do  
With prudence ? Let the torches flare !  
Quick, drown the doubts that hampered you !

“Cast weary wisdom to the wind !  
One thing, but one alone, I know :  
Love bent e’en Jove and made him blind !  
Upon Love’s revel we will go !”

The second, by Meleager, turns upon the same custom ; but it is here treated with the originality of imagination distinctive of his style :—

“I’ve drunk sheer madness ! Not with wine,  
But old fantastic tales I’ll arm  
My heart in heedlessness divine,  
And dare the road nor dream of harm !

“I’ll join Love’s rout ! Let thunder break,  
Let lightning blast me by the way !  
Invulnerable Love shall shake  
His ægis o’er my head to-day.”

In a third, Meleager recommends hard drinking as a remedy for the pains of love :—

“Drink, luckless lover ! Thy heart’s fiery rage  
Bacchus who gives oblivion shall assuage :  
Drink deep, and while thou drain’st the brimming bowl,  
Drive love’s dark anguish from thy fevered soul.”

Two of these little compositions deal with the old comparison between love and the sea. In the first, the lover's journey is likened to a comfortless voyage, where the house of the beloved will be for him safe anchorage after the storm :—

“Cold blows the winter wind : 'tis Love,  
Whose sweet eyes swim with honeyed tears,  
That bears me to thy doors, my love,  
Tossed by the storm of hopes and fears.

“Cold blows the blast of aching Love ;  
But be thou for my wandering sail,  
Adrift upon these waves of love,  
Safe harbour from the whistling gale !”

In the second, love itself is likened to the ocean, always shifting, never to be trusted :—

“Thy love is like an April storm  
Upon a false and fickle sea :  
One day you shine, and sunny warm  
Are those clear smiles you shower on me ;  
Next day from cloudy brows you rain  
Your anger on the ruffled main.

“Around me all the deeps are dark ;  
I whirl and wander to and fro,  
Like one who vainly steers his bark  
'Mid winds that battle as they blow :—  
Then raise the flag of love or hate,  
That I at last may know my fate !”

The peculiar distinction of Meleager's genius gives its special quality to the following dedication, in which the poet either is, or feigns himself to be, made captive by Love upon first landing in a strange country :—

“The Lady of desire, a goddess, gave  
My soul to thee ;  
To thee soft-sandalled Love hath sent a slave,  
Poor naked me :

Love compared to the sea.

Love and the stranger.

"A stranger on a stranger's soil, tight-bound  
 With bands of steel :—  
 I do but pray that we may once be found  
 Firm friends and leal !

"Yet thou dost spurn my prayers, refuse my love,  
 Still stern and mute ;  
 Time will not melt thee, nor the deeds that prove  
 How pure my suit.

"Have pity, king, have pity ! Fate hath willed  
 Thee god and lord :  
 Life in thy hands and death, to break or build,  
 For me is stored !"

Love's per-  
 fidy.

The next specimen is an attempt to render into English  
 stanzas one of Meleager's most passionate poems :—

"Did I not tell you so, and cry :  
 'Rash soul, by Venus, you'll be caught !  
 Ah, luckless soul, why will you fly  
 So near the toils that Love had wrought ?'

"Did I not warn you ? Now the net  
 Has tangled you, and in the string  
 You vainly strive, for Love has set  
 And bound your pinions, wing to wing :

"And placed you on the flames to pine,  
 And rubbed with myrrh your panting lip,  
 And when you thirsted given you wine  
 Of hot and bitter tears to sip.

"Ah, weary soul, fordone with pain !  
 Now in the fire you burn, and now  
 Take respite for a while again,  
 Draw better breath and cool your brow !

"Why weep and wail ? What time you first  
 Sheltered wild Love within your breast,  
 Did you not know the boy you nursed  
 Would prove a false and cruel guest ?

'Did you not know ? See, now he pays  
 The guerdon of your fostering care  
 With fire that on the spirit preys,  
 Mixed with cold snow-flakes of despair !

" You chose your lot. Then cease to weep :  
Endure this torment : tame your will :  
Remember, what you sowed, you reap :  
And, though it burns, 'tis honey still ! "

Here, lastly, is an Envoy, slightly altered in the English translation from Straton's original :—

Straton's  
envoy.

" It may be in the years to come  
That men who love shall think of me,  
And reading o'er these verses see  
How love was my life's martyrdom.

" Love-songs I write for him and her,  
Now this, now that, as Love dictates ;  
One birthday gift alone the Fates  
Gave me, to be Love's scrivener."

One large section of the Anthology remains to be considered. It contains what are called the *ἐπιγράμματα ἐπιδεικτικά*, or poems upon various subjects chosen for their propriety for rhetorical exposition. These epigrams, the favourites of modern imitators, display the Greek taste in this style of composition to the best advantage. The Greeks did not regard the epigram merely as a short poem with a sting in its tail—to quote the famous couplet :—

Greek and  
Roman con-  
ceptions of  
the epigram.

" Omne epigramma sit instar apis : sit aculeus illi :  
Sint sua mella : sit et corporis exigui." <sup>1</sup>

True to the derivation of the word, which means an inscription or superscription, they were satisfied if an epigram were short and gifted with the honey-dews of Helicon.<sup>2</sup> Meleager would

<sup>1</sup> " Three things must epigrams, like bees, have all ;  
A sting and honey and a body small."—RILEY.

<sup>2</sup> A certain Cyril gives this as his definition of a good epigram (ii. 75 ; compare No. 342 on p. 69) :—

πάγκαλόν ἐστὶ ἐπίγραμμα τὸ δίστιχον· ἢ δὲ παράλλῃς  
τοὺς τρεῖς, βαφφοῖς καὶ ἐπίγραμμα λέγεις.

Two lines complete the epigram—or three :  
Write more ; you aim at epic poetry."

Rhetorical  
epigrams on  
various  
themes.

have called his collection a Beehive, and not a Flower-garland, if he had acknowledged the justice of the Latin definition which has just been cited. The epigrams of which I am about to speak are simply little occasional poems, fugitive pieces, *Gelegenheitsgedichte*, varying in length from two to twenty lines, composed in elegiac metre, and determined, as to form and treatment, by the exigencies of the subject. Some of them, it is true, are noticeable for their point; but point is not the same as sting. The following panegyric of Athens, for example, approximates to the epigram as it is commonly conceived (ii. 13):<sup>1</sup>—

γῇ μὲν ἔαρ κόσμος πολυδένδρεος, αἰθέρι δ' ἄστροι,  
Ἑλλάδι δ' ἦδε χθών, οἷδε δὲ τῇ πόλει.

The same may be said about the lines upon the vine and the goat (ii. 15; compare 20):<sup>2</sup>—

κῆν με φάγῃς ἐπὶ ῥίζαν ὅμως ἔτι καρποφορήσω  
ὅσσον ἐπισπείσῃ σοὶ τράγε θνομένην :

Here the essence of this kind of poetry is said to be brevity. But nothing is said about a sting. And on the point of brevity, the Cyril, to whom this couplet is attributed, is far too stringent when judged by the best Greek standards. The modern notion of the epigram is derived from a study of Martial, whose strongest verses are satirical and therefore of necessity stinging.

<sup>1</sup> “Spring with her waving trees  
Adorns the earth : to heaven  
The pride of stars is given :  
Athens illustrates Greece :  
She on her brows doth set  
Of men this coronet.”

<sup>2</sup> “Though thou shouldst gnaw me to the root,  
Destructive goat, enough of fruit  
I bear, betwixt thy horns to shed  
When to the altar thou art led.”

METIVALE.

and the following satire, so well known by the parody of Porson (ii. 325) :<sup>1</sup>—

πάντες μὲν Κίλικες κακοὶ ἄνθρωποι· ἐν δὲ Κίλικιν  
εἰς ἀγαθὸς Κινύρης, καὶ Κινύρης δὲ Κίλιξ.

Again the play of words in the last line of this next epigram (ii. 24) gives a sort of pungency to its conclusion :<sup>2</sup>—

ἀτθὶ κόρα μελίθρεπτε, λάλος λάλον ἀρπάξασα  
τέττιγα παανοῖς δαῖτα φέρεις τέκεσιν,  
τὸν λάλον ἂ λαλόεσσα, τὸν εὐπτερον ἂ πτερόεσσα,  
τὸν ξένον ἂ ξείνα, τὸν θερινὸν θερινά ;  
κούχῃ τάχος ῥίψεις ; οὐ γὰρ θέμις οἷδὲ δίκαιον  
ὄλλυσθ' ἵμνοπόλους ἵμνοπόλοις στόμασιν.

The Greek epigram has this, in fact, in common with all good poems, that the conclusion should be the strongest and most emphatic portion. But in liberty of subject and of treatment it corresponds to the Italian Sonnet. Unquestionably of this kind is the famous poem of Ptolemy upon the

Comparison  
of Greek  
epigram and  
Italian  
sonnet.

<sup>1</sup> "The Germans at Greek  
Are sadly to seek,  
Not five in five-score,  
But ninety-five more ;  
All—save only Hermann ;  
And Hermann's a German."—PORSON.

<sup>2</sup> "Attic maid ! with honey fed,  
Bear'st thou to thy callow brood  
Yonder locust from the mead,  
Destined their delicious food ?

"Ye have kindred voices clear,  
Ye alike unfold the wing,  
Migrate hither, sojourn here,  
Both attendant on the spring.

"Ah ! for pity drop the prize ;  
Let it not with truth be said,  
That a songster gasps and dies,  
That a songster may be fed."—W. COWPER.

stars (ii. 118), which recalls to mind the saying of Kant, that the two things which moved his awe were the stars of heaven above him and the moral law within the soul of man :<sup>1</sup>—

οἶδ' ὅτι θνατὸς ἐγὼ καὶ ἐφάμερος· ἀλλ' ὅταν ἄστρον  
μαστείῳ πεκινὰς ἀμφιδρόμους ἔλικας,  
οὐκέτ' ἐπιφαίῳ γαίης ποσσίν, ἀλλὰ παρ' αὐτῷ  
Ζηνὶ θεοτρεφέος πίμπλαμαι ἀμβροσίης.

Epigrams on  
the condi-  
tions of  
human life.

The poem on human life, which has been attributed severally to Poseidippus and to Plato Comicus, and which Bacon thought worthy of imitation, may take rank with the most elevated sonnets of modern literature (ii. 71) :<sup>2</sup>—

ποίην τις βίοτοιο τάμῃ τρίβον ; εἰν ἀγορῇ μὲν  
νείκεα καὶ χαλεπαὶ πρήξεις· ἐν δὲ δόμοις  
φροντίδες· ἐν δ' ἀγροῖς καμάτων ἄλις· ἐν δὲ θαλάσῃ  
τάρβος· ἐπὶ ξείνης δ', ἣν μὲν ἔχῃς τῆ δέος·  
ἦν δ' ἀπορήs, ἀνιηρόν· ἔχεις γύμον ; οὐκ ἀμέριμνος  
ἔσσεαι· οὐ γαμέεις ; ζῆς ἐτ' ἐρημότερος·  
τέκνα πόνοι, πήρωσις ἅπαις βίος· αἱ νεότητες

---

<sup>1</sup> "Though but the being of a day,  
When I yon planet's course survey,  
This earth I then despise :  
Near Jove's eternal throne I stand,  
And quaff from an immortal hand  
The nectar of the skies."—PHILIP SMYTH.

<sup>2</sup> Bacon's version, "The world's a bubble, and the life of man—" is both well known and too long to quote. The following is from the pen of Sir John Beaumont :—

"What course of life should wretched mortals take ?  
In courts hard questions large contention make :  
Care dwells in houses, labour in the field,  
Tumultuous seas affrighting dangers yield.  
In foreign lands thou never canst be blessed ;  
If rich, thou art in fear ; if poor, distressed.  
In wedlock frequent discontentments swell ;  
Unmarried persons as in deserts dwell.  
How many troubles are with children born ;  
Yet he that wants them counts himself forlorn.



ἄφρονες, αἱ πολιαί δ' ἔμπαλιν ἀδρανέες·  
 ἦν ἄρα τοῖν δισσοῖν ἐνὸς αἵρεσις, ἣ τὸ γενέσθαι  
 μηδέποτ' ἢ τὸ θανεῖν αὐτίκα τικτόμενον.

The reverse of this picture is displayed with much felicity and geniality, but with less of force, by Metrodorus (ii. 72):<sup>1</sup>—

παντοίην βιότοιο τάμοις τρίβον· ἐν ἀγορῇ μὲν  
 κύδεα καὶ πινυταὶ πρήξεις· ἐν δὲ δόμοις  
 ἄμπαυμ'· ἐν δ' ἀγροῖς φήσιος χάρις· ἐν δὲ θαλάσσῃ  
 κέρδος· ἐπὶ ξείνης, ἦν μὲν ἔχῃς τι, κλέος·  
 ἦν δ' ἀπορῆς, μόνος οἶδας· ἔχεις γάμον; οἶκος ἄριστος  
 ἔσsetαι· οὐ γαμέεις; ζῆς ἔτ' ἐλαφρότερος·  
 τέκνα πόθος, ἀφροντίς ἅπαις βίος· αἱ νεότητες  
 ῥωμαλέαι, πολιαί δ' ἔμπαλιν εἰσεβέες·  
 οὐκ ἄρα τῶν δισσῶν ἐνὸς αἵρεσις, ἣ τὸ γενέσθαι  
 μηδέποτ' ἢ τὸ θανεῖν πάντα γὰρ ἐσθλὰ βίψ.

Some of the epigrams of this section are written in the true style of Elegies. The following splendid Threnody by Antipater of Sidon upon the ruins of Corinth, which was

Young men are wauton, and of wisdom void ;  
 Gray hairs are cold, unfit to be employed.  
 Who would not one of these two offers choose,  
 Not to be born, or breath with speed to lose !"

- <sup>1</sup> " In every way of life true pleasure flows :  
 Immortal fame from public action grows :  
 Within the doors is found appeasing rest ;  
 In fields the gifts of nature are expressed.  
 The sea brings gain, the rich abroad provide  
 To blaze their names, the poor their wants to hide :  
 All households best are governed by a wife ;  
 His cares are light, who leads a single life :  
 Sweet children are delights which marriage bless ;  
 He that hath none disturbs his thoughts the less.  
 Strong youth can triumph in victorious deeds ;  
 Old age the soul with pious motions feeds.  
 All states are good, and they are falsely led  
 Who wish to be unborn or quickly dead."

SIR JOHN BEAUMONT.

Antipater's  
lament on  
Corinth.

imitated by Agathias in his lines on Troy, may be cited as perfect in this style of composition (ii. 29):<sup>1</sup>—

ποῦ τὸ περίβλεπτον κάλλος σίο, Δωρὶ Κόρινθε;  
 ποῦ στέφανοι πύργων, ποῦ τὰ πάλαι κτέανα,  
 ποῦ νηοὶ μακάρων, ποῦ δώματα, ποῦ δὲ δάμαρτες  
 Σισύφιαι, λαῶν θ' αἱ ποτὲ μυριάδες;  
 οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδ' ἶχνος, πολυκάμμορε, σείο λείπεται,  
 πάντα δὲ συμμάρψας ἐξέφαγεν πόλεμος·  
 μοῦναι ἀπόρρητοι Νηρηίδες, Ὀκεανοῖο  
 κοῦραι, σὼν ἀχέων μίμονεν ἀλκυνόνες.

Philippus on  
Leonidas.

It is a grand picture of the queen of pleasure in her widowhood and desolation mourned over by the deathless daughters of the plunging sea. Occasionally the theme of the epigram is historical. The finest, perhaps, of this sort is a poem by Philippus on Leonidas (ii. 59):<sup>2</sup>—

ποὺλὺ Λεωνίδεω κατιδὼν δέμας αὐτοδαΐκτον  
 Ξέρξης ἐχλαΐνον φάρεϊ πορφυρέῳ·  
 κῆκ νεκύνω δ' ἤχησεν ὁ τᾶς Σπάρτας πολὺς ἦρως·  
 οὐδέχομαι προδόταις μισθὸν ὀφειλόμενον·  
 ἀσπίς ἐμοὶ τύμβον κόσμος μέγας· αἶρε τὰ Περσῶν  
 χῆξω κείς αἰδὼν ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος.

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<sup>1</sup> "Where, Corinth, are thy glories now,  
 Thy ancient wealth, thy castled brow,  
 Thy solemn fanes, thy halls of state,  
 Thy high-born dames, thy crowded gate?  
 There's not a ruin left to tell  
 Where Corinth stood, how Corinth fell.  
 The Nereids of thy double sea  
 Alone remain to wail for thee."—GOLDWIN SMITH.

<sup>2</sup> "Seeing the martyred corpse of Sparta's king  
 Cast 'mid the dead,  
 Xerxes around the mighty limbs did fling  
 His mantle red.  
 Then from the shades the glorious hero cried:  
 'Not mine a traitor's guerdon. 'Tis my pride  
 This shield upon my grave to wear.  
 Forbear  
 Your Persian gifts; a Spartan I will go  
 To Death below.'"

Few, however, of the epigrams rise to the altitude of those I have been lately quoting. Their subjects are for the most part simple incidents, or such as would admit of treatment within the space of an engraved gem. The story of the girls who played at dice upon the house-roof is told very prettily in the following lines (ii. 31):<sup>1</sup>—

Descriptive  
pieces.

αἱ τρισαὶ ποτε παῖδες ἐν ἀλλήλαισιν ἔπαιζον  
κλήρῳ, τίς προτέρη βήσεται εἰς αἶδην·  
καὶ τρίς μὲν χειρῶν ἔβαλον κύβον, ἤλθε δὲ πασῶν  
ἐς μίαν· ἥ δ' ἐγέλα κλήρον ὀφειλόμενον·  
ἐκ τέγεος γὰρ ἄελπτον ἔπειτ' ὤλισθε πέσημι,  
δύμωρος, ἐς δ' αἶδην ἤλυθεν, ὡς ἔλαχεν·  
ἄψευδής ὁ κλήρος ὅτι κακόν· ἐς δὲ τὸ λῶον  
οὔτ' εὐχαὶ θνητοῖς εἰστοχοὶ οὔτε χέρες.

Not the least beautiful are those which describe natural objects. The following six lines are devoted to an oak-tree (ii. 14):<sup>2</sup>—

κλῶνες ἀπηγόριοι ταναῆς δρυὸς, εἷσκιον ὕψος  
ἀνδράσιν ἀκρητον καῦμα φυλασσομένοις,  
εἰπέταλοι, κεράμων στεγανώτεροι, οἰκία φαττῶν,  
οἰκία τεττίγων, ἐνδιοὶ ἀκρεμόνες,  
κῆμὲ τὸν ὑμετέραισιν ὑποκλινθέντα κόμαισιν  
ρίψασθ', ἀκτίνων ἡελίου φυγάδα.

- <sup>1</sup> "One day three girls were casting lots in play,  
Which first to Acheron should take her way ;  
Thrice with their sportive hands they threw, and thrice  
To the same hand returned the fateful dice ;  
The maiden laughed when thus her doom was told :  
Alas ! that moment from the roof she rolled !  
So sure is Fate whene'er it bringeth bale,  
While prayers and vows for bliss must ever fail."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

- <sup>2</sup> "Aerial branches of tall oak, retreat  
Of loftiest shade for those who shun the heat,  
With foliage full, more close than tiling, where  
Dove and cicada dwell aloft in air,  
Me, too, that thus my head beneath you lay,  
Protect, a fugitive from noon's fierce ray."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

Woodland  
sketches.

Here, again, is a rustic retreat for lovers, beneath the spreading branches of a plane (ii. 43):<sup>1</sup>—

ἀ χλοερὰ πλατάνιστος ἰδ' ὡς ἔκριψε φιλεύντων  
ὄργια, τὰν ἱερὰν φυλλάδα τεινομένα ·  
ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ἀκρεμόεσσιν ἐοῖς κεχαρισμένος ὥραις  
ἡμερίδος λαρῆς βότρυν ἀποκρέμαται ·  
οὕτως, ὦ πλατάνιστε, φίοις · χλοερὰ δ' ἀπὸ σείω  
φυλλὰς ἀεὶ κεύθοι τοὺς Παφίης ὀάρους.

Of the same sort are this invitation (ii. 529):<sup>2</sup>—

ὑψίκομον πυρὰ τάνδε καθίζεο φωνήεσσαν  
φρίσσουσιν πικινοῖς κώνον ὑπὸ Ζεφύροις,  
καὶ σοὶ καχλάζουσιν ἑμοῖς παρὰ νάμασι σίριγξ  
θελγομένων ἀξει κῶμα κατὰ βλεφάρων.

and this plea from the oak-tree to the woodman to be spared (ii. 63):<sup>3</sup>—

ὦνερ τῶν βαλάνων τὰν ματέρα φείδεο κόπτειν,  
φείδεο · γηραλέαν δ' ἐκκεραίῃζε πίτνιν,  
ἢ πένκαν, ἢ τάνδε πολυστέλεχον παλίουρον,  
ἢ πρίνον, ἢ τὰν αὐαλέαν κόμαρον ·  
τηλόθι δ' ὕσχε δρυὸς πελέκυν · κοκύναι γὰρ ἔλεξαν  
ἀμὴν ὡς πρότεραι ματέρες ἐντὶ δρύες.

<sup>1</sup> "Wide-spreading plane-tree, whose thick branches meet  
To form for lovers an obscure retreat,  
Whilst with thy foliage closely intertwine  
The curling tendrils of the clustered vine,  
Still mayst thou flourish, in perennial green,  
To shade the votaries of the Paphian queen."—W. SHEPHERD.

<sup>2</sup> "Come sit you down beneath this towering tree,  
Whose rustling leaves sing to the zephyr's call;  
My pipe shall join the streamlet's melody,  
And slumber on your charmed eyelids fall."

J. A. SYMONDS, M.D.

<sup>3</sup> "Spare the parent of acorns, good wood-cutter, spare!  
Let the time-honoured fir feel the weight of your stroke,  
The many-stalked thorn, or acanthus worn bare,  
Pine, arbutus, ilex—but touch not the oak!  
Far hence be your axe, for our grandams have sung  
How the oaks are the mothers from whom we all sprung."

MÉRIVALE.

Among the epigrams which seem to have been composed in the same spirit as those exquisite little *capricci* engraved by Greek artists upon gems, few are more felicitous than the three following. The affection of the Greeks for the grasshopper is one of their most charming *naïvetés*. Everybody knows the pretty story Socrates tells about these *Μουσῶν προφήται*, or Prophets of the Muses, in the *Phædrus*—how they once were mortals who took such delight in the songs of the Muses that, “Singing always, they never thought of eating and drinking, until at last they forgot and died: and now they live again in the grasshoppers, and this is the return the Muses make to them—they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, but are always singing from the moment that they are born, and never eating or drinking.” Thus the grasshoppers were held sacred in Greece, like storks in Germany and robins in England. Most of the epigrams about them turn on this sanctity. The following is a plea for pity from an imprisoned grasshopper to the rustics who have caught him (ii. 76):<sup>1</sup>—

The grasshopper.

τίπτε με τὸν φιλέρημον ἀναιδέϊ ποιμένες ἄγρη  
 τέττιγα δροσερῶν ἔλκετ' ἀπ' ἀκρεμόνων,  
 τὴν Νυμφῶν παροδίτιν ἀηδόνα, κῆματι μέσσω  
 οὔρεσι καὶ σκιεραῖς ξουθὰ λαλεῦντα νάπαις;  
 ἡνίδε καὶ κίχλην καὶ κόσσυφον, ἡνίδε τόσσους  
 ψᾶρας, ἀρουραίης ἀρπαγας εὐπορίας·  
 καρπῶν δηλητῆρας ἐλεῖν θέμις· ὅλλυτ' ἐκείνους·  
 φύλλων καὶ χλοερῆς τίς φθόνος ἐστὶ δρόσου;

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<sup>1</sup> “ Why, ruthless shepherds, from my dewy spray  
 In my lone haunt, why tear me thus away?  
 Me, the Nymphs' wayside minstrel, whose sweet note  
 O'er sultry hill is heard and shady grove to float?  
 Lo! where the blackbird, thrush, and greedy host  
 Of starlings fatten at the farmer's cost!  
 With just revenge those ravagers pursue:  
 But grudge not my poor leaf and sip of grassy dew.”

WRANGHAM.

Eunomus  
and the  
cricket.

Another epigram on the same page tells how the poet found a grasshopper struggling in a spider's web and released it with these words:—"Go safe and free with your sweet voice of song!" But the prettiest of all is this long story (ii. 119):<sup>1</sup>—

Εὐνομον, ὦ πολλον, σὺ μὲν οἶσθ' ἄγε, πῶς ποτ' ἐνίκων  
Σπάρτιν ὁ Λοκρὸς ἐγὼ· πευθομένοις δ' ἐνέπω.  
αἰόλον ἐν κιθάρᾳ νόμον ἔκρεκον, ἐν δὲ μετείσα  
ψῶν μοι χορδᾶν πλάκτρον ἀπεκρέμασεν·  
καὶ μοι φθόγγον ἐτοῖμον ὀπανίκα καιρὸς ἀπῆται,  
εἰς ἀκοῦς ῥυθμῶν τῶτρεκὲς οὐκ ἔνεμεν·  
καὶ τις ἀπ' αὐτομάτῳ κιθάρας ἐπὶ πῆχυν ἐπιπτὰς  
τέττιξ ἐπλήρου τοῦλλιπὲς ἁρμονίας·  
νεῖρα γὰρ ἐξ ἐτίνασσον· ὅθ' ἐβδομάτας δὲ μελοῖμαν  
χορδᾶς, τὰν τοίτῳ γῆριν ἐκιχράμεθα·  
πρὸς γὰρ ἐμὴν μελέταν ὁ μεσαμβρινὸς οὐρεσιν ψῶς  
τήνῳ τὸ ποιμενικὸν φθέγμα μεθρημόσατο,  
καὶ μὲν ὅτε φθέγγοιτο, σὺν ἀψίχοις τόκα νευραῖς  
τῷ μεταβαλλομένῳ συμμετέπιπτε θρόφῳ·  
τοῦνεκα συμφώνῳ μὲν ἔχω χάριν· ὅς δὲ τυπωθεὶς  
χάλκεος ἀμετέρας ἔξεθ' ὑπὲρ κιθάρας.

So friendly were the relations of the Greeks with the grasshoppers. We do not wonder when we read that the Athenians wore golden grasshoppers in their hair.

<sup>1</sup> "Phœbus, thou know'st me—Eunomus, who beat Spartis: the tale for others I repeat:  
Defly upon my lyre I played and sang,  
When 'mid the song a broken harp-string rang,  
And seeking for its sound, I could not hear  
The note responsive to my descant clear.  
Then on my lyre, unasked, unsought, there flew  
A grasshopper, who filled the cadence due;  
For while six chords beneath my fingers cried,  
He with his tuneful voice the seventh supplied:  
The mid-day songster of the mountains set  
His pastoral ditty to my canzonet;  
And when he sang, his modulated throat  
Accorded with the lifeless strings I smote.  
Therefore I thank my fellow-minstrel:—he  
Sits on my lyre in brass, as you may see."

Baths, groves, gardens, houses, temples, city-gates, and works of art furnish the later epigrammatists with congenial subjects. The Greeks of the Empire exercised much ingenuity in describing—whether in prose, like Philostratus, or in verse, like Agathias—the famous monuments of the maturity of Hellas. In this style the epigrams on statues are at once the most noticeable and the most abundant. The cow of Myron has at least twoscore of little sonnets to herself. The horses of Lysippus, the Zeus of Pheidias, the Rhamnusian statue of Nemesis, the Praxitelean Venus, various images of Erôs, the Niobids, Marsyas, Ariadne, Herakles, Alexander, poets, physicians, orators, historians, and all the charioteers and athletes preserved in the museums of Byzantium or the groves of Altis, are described with a minuteness and a point that enable us to identify many of them with the surviving monuments of Greek sculpture. Pictures also come in for their due share of notice. A Polyxena of Polycletus, a Philoctetes of Parrhasius, and a Medea, which may have been the original of the famous Pompeian fresco, are specially remarkable. Then, again, cups engraved with figures in relief of Tantalus or Love, seals inscribed with Phœbus or Medusa, gems and intaglios of all kinds furnish matter for other epigrams. The following couplet on a Bacchus engraved in amethyst turns upon an untranslatable play of words (ii. 149):<sup>1</sup>—

ἡλίθος ἐστ' ἀμέθυτος, ἐγὼ δ' ὁ πότης Διόνυσος·  
πεισάτω ἢ νήφειν μ', ἢ μαθέτω μεθύειν.

Amid this multitude of poems it is difficult to make a fair or representative selection. There are, however, four which I

<sup>1</sup> "The stone is amethyst (i.e. that which cannot be intoxicated, or which wards off intoxication). But I am the wine-bibber, Dionysus. Let it persuade me to be sober, or let it learn how to be drunken." This crystal was supposed to be an antidote to the effects of wine, and therefore antagonistic in its operation to the god.

A statue of  
Time by  
Lysippus.

cannot well omit. The first is written by Poseidippus on a lost statue of Lysippus (ii. 584):<sup>1</sup>—

τίς πόθεν ὁ πλάττης ; Σικυνώσιος· οὐνομα δὴ τίς ;  
Λύσιππος. σὺ δὲ τίς ; Καιρὸς ὁ πανδαμάτωρ·  
τίπτε δ' ἐπ' ἄκρα βέβηκας ; αἰὲ τροχάω. τί δὲ ταρσοὺς  
ποσσὶν ἔχεις διφνεῖς ; ἵπταμ' ἵπηνέμιος·  
χειρὶ δὲ δεξιτερῇ τί φέρεις ξυρόν ; ἀνδράσι δείγμα  
ὡς ἀκμῆς πάσης ὀξύτερος τελέθω.  
ἢ δὲ κόμη τί κατ' ὄψιν ; ἵπαντιάσαντι λαβέσθαι.  
νῇ Δία τὰξόπιθεν δ' εἰς τί φαλακρὰ πέλει ;  
τὸν γὰρ ἅπαξ πτηνοῖσι παραθρέξαντά με ποσσὶν  
οὔτις ἔθ' ἱμείρων δράζεται ἐξόπιθεν.  
τοῦνεχ' ὁ τεχνίτης σε διέπλασεν ; εἵνεκεν ἡμῶν,  
ξείνε· καὶ ἐν προθύροις θῆκε διδασκαλίην.

The statue  
of Nemesis  
at Marathon.

The second describes the statue of Nemesis erected near Marathon by Pheidias—that memorable work by which the greatest of sculptors recorded the most important crisis in the world's history (ii. 573):<sup>2</sup>—

χιονέην με λίθον παλινανξέος ἐκ περιωπῆς  
λαοτύπος τμήξας πετροτόμοις ἀκίσι  
Μῆδος ἐποντοπόρεισεν, ὅπως ἀνδρεῖκέλα τεύξῃ,  
τῆς κατ' Ἀθηναίων σὺμβολα καμμονίης·

<sup>1</sup> "The sculptor's country? Sicyon. His name?  
Lysippus. You? Time that all things can tame.  
Why thus a-tiptoe? I have halted never.  
Why ankle-winged? I fly like wind for ever.  
But in your hand that razor? 'Tis a pledge  
That I am keener than the keenest edge.  
Why falls your hair in front? For him to bind  
Who meets me. True: but when you're bald behind?  
Yes, because when with winged feet I have passed  
'Tis vain upon my back your hands to cast.  
Why did the sculptor carve you? For your sake  
Here in the porch I stand; my lesson take."

<sup>2</sup> "My snowy marble from the mountain rude  
A Median sculptor with sharp chisel hewed,  
And brought me o'er the sea, that he might place  
A trophied statue of the Greeks' disgrace.



ὥς δὲ δαΐζομένοις Μαραθῶν ἀντέκτυπε Πέρσαις  
καὶ νέες ὑγροπόρουν χεύμασιν αἱμαλέοις,  
ἔξεσαν Ἀδρήστειαν ἀριστῶδινες Ἀθῆναι,  
δαίμον' ὑπερφιάλοισ ἀντίπαλον μερόπων·  
ἀντιταλαντεῖω τὰς ἐλπίδας· εἰμὶ δὲ καὶ νῦν  
Νίκη Ἑρεχθεΐδαις, Ἀσσυρίοις Νέμεσις.

The third celebrates the Aphrodite of Praxiteles in Cnidos, The Aphrodite of Praxiteles. whose garden has been so elegantly described by Lucian (ii. 560):<sup>1</sup>—

ἡ Παφίη Κυθήρεια δι' οἴδατος ἐς Κνιδὸν ἦλθε  
βουλομένη κατιδεῖν εἰκόνα τὴν ἰδίην·  
πάντη δ' ἀθρήσασα περισκέπτῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ,  
φθέγγετο· ποῦ γυμνὴν εἶδε με Πραξιτέλῃς;

The fourth is composed with much artifice of style upon a Love bound to a pillar. statue of Love bound by his arms to a pillar (ii. 567):<sup>2</sup>—

κλαῖε δισεκφύκτως σφιγχθεὶς χέρας, ἄκριτε δαίμον,  
κλαῖε μάλα, στάζων ψυχῶτακῇ δάκρυα,

---

But when the routed Persians heard the roar  
Of Marathon, and ships swam deep in gore,  
Then Athens, nurse of heroes, sculptured me  
The queen that treads on arrogance to be:  
I hold the scales of hope: my name is this—  
Niké for Greece, for Asia Nemesis."

<sup>1</sup> "Bright Cytherea thought one day  
To Cnidos she'd repair,  
Gliding across the watery way  
To view her image there.  
But when arrived, she cast around  
Her eyes divinely bright,  
And saw upon that holy ground  
The gazing world's delight,  
Amazed, she cried—while blushes told  
The thoughts that swelled her breast—  
Where did Praxiteles behold  
My form? or has he guessed?"

J. H. MERIVALE.

<sup>2</sup> "Weep, reckless god; for now your hands are tied:  
Weep, wear your soul out with the flood of tears

σωφροσύνας ἰβρισιτὰ, φρενοκλόπε, ληστὰ λογισμοῖ,  
 πτανὸν πῦρ, ψυχᾶς τραῦμ' ἀόρατον, Ἔρως·  
 θνατοῖς μὲν λύσις ἐστὶ γόων ὁ σὺς, ἀκριτε, δεσμός·  
 ᾧ σφιγχθεὶς κωφοῖς πέμπε λιτὰς ἀνέμοις·  
 ὃν δὲ βροτοῖς ἀφύλακτος ἐνέφλεγες ἐν φρεσὶ πυρσὸν  
 ἄθρει νῦν ὑπὸ σῶν σβεσννύμενον δακρύων.

Variety and  
critical  
value of the  
epigram.

In bringing this review of the Anthology to a close I feel that I have been guilty of two errors. I have wearied the reader with quotations. Yet I have omitted countless epigrams of the purest beauty. The very riches of this flower-garden of little poems are an obstacle to its due appreciation. Each epigram in itself is perfect, and ought to be carefully and lovingly studied. But it is difficult for the critic to deal in a single chapter with upwards of four thousand of these precious gems. There are many points of view which, with adequate space and opportunity, might have been taken for the better illustration of the epigrams. Their connection with the later literature of Greece, especially with the rhetoricians, Philostratus, Alciphron, and Libanius, many of whose best compositions are epigrams in prose—as Jonson knew when he turned them into lyrics; their still more intimate æsthetic harmony with the engraved stones and minor bas-reliefs, which bear exactly the same relation to Greek sculpture as the epigrams to the more august forms of Greek poetry; the lives of their authors; the historical events to which they not unfrequently allude—all these are topics for elaborate dissertation.

Their per-  
sonal and  
private  
interest.

Perhaps, however, the true secret of their charm is this; that in their couplets, after listening to the choric raptures of triumphant public art, we turn aside to hear the private utterances, the harmoniously modulated whispers of a multi-

Heart-robber, thief of reason, foe to pride,  
 Winged fire, thou wound unseen the soul that sears!  
 Freedom from grief to us these bonds of thine,  
 Wherein thou waildest to the deaf winds, bring:  
 Behold! the torch wherewith thou mad'st us pine,  
 Beneath thy frequent tears is languishing!"

tude of Greek poets telling us their inmost thoughts and feelings. The unique melodies of Meleager, the chaste and exquisite delicacy of Callimachus, the clear dry style of Straton, Plato's unearthly subtlety of phrase, Antipater's perfect polish, the good sense of Palladas, the fretful sweetness of Agathias, the purity of Simonides, the gravity of Poseidippus, the pointed grace of Philip, the few but mellow tones of Sappho and Erinna, the tenderness of Simmias, the biting wit of Lucillius, the sunny radiance of Theocritus—all these good things are ours in the Anthology. But beyond these perfumes of the poets known to fame is yet another. Over Anonymous. very many of the sweetest and the strongest of the epigrams is written the pathetic word ἀδέσποτον—"without a master." Hail to you, dead poets, unnamed, but dear to the Muses! Surely with Pindar and Anacreon, with Sappho and with Sophocles, the bed of flowers is spread for you in those "black-petalled hollows of Pieria" where you bade Euripides farewell.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### HERO AND LEANDER

Virgil's Mention of this Tale—Ovid and Statius—Autumnal Poetry—  
Confusion between the Mythical Musæus and the Grammarian—The  
Introduction of the Poem—Analysis of the Story—Hallam's Judg-  
ment on Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*—Comparison of Marlowe and  
Musæus—Classic and Romantic Art.

Quid juvenis, magnum cui versat in ossibus ignem  
Durus amor? Nempe abruptis turbata procellis  
Nocte natat cæca serus freta; quem super ingens  
Porta tonat cæli, et scopulis inlisa reclamant  
Æquora; nec miseri possunt revocare parentes,  
Nec moritura super crudeli funere virgo.<sup>1</sup>

Hero and  
Leander in  
the Georgics.

THIS is the first allusion to a story, rather Roman than Greek, which was destined to play an important part in literature. The introduction of the fable, without names, into a poem like the third Georgic shows, however, that the pathetic tale of Hero and Leander's love had already found familiar representation in song or sculpture or wall-painting before Virgil touched it with the genius that turned all it touched to gold. Ovid went further, and placed the maiden of Sestos among the heroines for whom he wrote rhetorical epistles in elegiac verse.

<sup>1</sup> "What of the youth, whose marrow the fierceness of Love has turned to flame? Late in the dark night he swims o'er seas boiling with bursting storms; and over his head the huge gates of the sky thunder; and the seas, dashing on the rocks, call to him to return: nor can the thought of his parents' agony entice him back, nor of the maiden doomed to a cruel death upon his corpse."—Virg. *Georg.* iii. 258. Translated by an Oxford Graduate.

In Statius, again, we get a glimpse of the story translated from the sphere of romance into the region of antique mythology. To the hero Admetus, Adrastus gives a mantle dyed with Tyrian purple, and embroidered with Leander's death. There flows the Hellespont; the youth is vainly struggling with the swollen waves; and there stands Hero on her tower; and the lamp already flickers in the blast that will destroy both light and lives at once. It still remained for a grammarian of the fifth century, Musæus, of whom nothing but the name is known, to give the final form to this poem of love and death. The spring-tide of the epic and the idyll was over. When Musæus entered the Heliconian meadows to pluck this last pure rose of Greek summer, autumn had already set its silent finger on "bare, ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang." His little poem of three hundred and forty hexameters is both an epic and an idyll. While maintaining the old heroic style of narrative by means of repeated lines, it recalls the sweetness of Theocritus in studied descriptions, dactylic cadences, and brief reflective sayings that reveal the poet's mind. Like some engraved gems, the latest products of the glyptic art, this poem adjusts the breadth of the grand manner to the small scale required by jewellery, treating a full subject in a narrow space, and in return endowing slight motives with dignity by nobleness of handling.

In Ovid,  
Statius,  
Musæus.

Calm mornings of sunshine visit us at times in early November, appearing like glimpses of departed spring amid the wilderness of wet and windy days that lead to winter. It is pleasant, when these interludes of silvery light occur, to ride into the woods and see how wonderful are all the colours of decay. Overhead, the elms and chestnuts hang their wealth of golden leaves, while the beeches darken into russet tones, and the wild cherry glows like blood-red wine. In the hedges crimson haws and scarlet hips are wreathed with hoary clematis or necklaces of coral briony berries; the brambles burn with many-coloured flames; the dog-wood is

Autumnal  
tints.

bronzed with purple; and here and there the spindle-wood puts forth its fruit, like knots of rosy buds, on delicate frail twigs. Underneath lie fallen leaves, and the brown brake rises to our knees as we thread the forest paths. Everything is beautiful with beauty born of over-ripeness and decline. Green summer comes no more this year, at any rate. In front are death and bareness and the winter's frost.

Beauty of  
decadent  
poetry.

Such a day of sunlight in the November of Greek poetry is granted to us by *Hero and Leander*. The grace of the poem is soul-compelling—indescribable for sweetness. Yet every epithet, each requisite conceit, and all the studied phrases that yield charm, remind us that the end has come. There is peculiar pathos in this autumnal loveliness of literature upon the wane. In order to appreciate it fully, we must compare the mellow tints of Musæus with the morning glory of Homer or of Pindar. We then find that, in spite of so much loss, in spite of warmth and full light taken from us, and promise of the future exchanged for musings on the past, a type of beauty unattainable by happier poets of the spring has been revealed. Not to accept this grace with thanksgiving, because, forsooth, December, that takes all away, is close at hand, would be ungrateful.<sup>1</sup>

Its evanes-  
cent charm.

Yet, though clearly perceptible by the æsthetic sense, it is far less easy to define its quality than to miss it altogether. We do not gain much, for example, by pointing to the reminiscences of bygone phraseology curiously blended with new forms of language, to the artificial subtleties of rhythm wrung

<sup>1</sup> It is not only in Musæus that we trace a fascination comparable to that of autumn tints in trees. The description by Ausonius of Love caught and crucified in the garden of Proserpine, which contains the two following lines:—

Inter arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver  
Et tacitos sine labe lacus sine murmure rivos:

might be quoted as an instance of the charm. Indeed, it pervades the best Latin poetry of the silver age, the Epistles of Philostratus, many of the later Greek epigrams, and all the Greek romances, with *Daphnis and Chloe* at their head.

from well-worn metres, to the richness of effect produced by conscious use of telling images, to the iridescent shimmer of mixed metaphors, compound epithets, and daring tropes, contrasted with the undertone of sadness which betrays the "idle singer of an empty day," although these elements are all combined in the autumnal style. Nor will it profit us to distinguish this kind of beauty from the *beauté maludive* of morbid art. So difficult, indeed, is it to seize its character with any certainty, that in the case of *Hero and Leander* the uncritical scholars of the Italian Renaissance mistook the evening for the morning star of Greek poetry, confounding Musæus the grammarian with the semi-mythic bard of the Orphean age. When Aldus Manutius conceived his great idea of issuing Greek literature entire from the Venetian press, he put forth *Hero and Leander* first of all in 1498, with a preface that ran as follows:—"I was desirous that Musæus, the most ancient poet, should form a prelude to Aristotle and the other sages who will shortly be imprinted at my hands." Marlowe spoke of "divine Musæus," and even the elder Scaliger saw no reason to suspect that the grammarian's studied verse was not the first clear wood-note of the Eleusinian singer. What renders this mistake pardonable is the fact that, however autumnal may be the poet's charm, no point of the genuine Greek youthfulness of fancy has been lost. Through conceits, confusions of diction, and over-sweetness of style, emerges the clear outline which characterised Greek art in all its periods. Both persons and situations are plastically treated—subjected, that is to say, to the conditions best fulfilled by sculpture. The emotional element is adequate to the imaginative presentation; the feeling penetrates the form and gives it life, without exceeding the just limits which the form imposes. The importance of this observation will appear when we examine the same poem romantically handled by our own Marlowe. If nothing but the *Hero and Leander* of Musæus had survived the ruin of Greek literature, we should still be able to distinguish how Greek poets

Musæus regarded by the humanists as the earliest of Greek poets.

dealt with their material, and to point the difference between the classic and the modern styles.

Classical  
purity of  
outline.

What is truly admirable in this poem, marking it as genuinely Greek, is the simplicity of structure, clearness of motives, and unaffected purity of natural feeling. The first fifteen lines set forth, by way of proem, the whole subject :—

εἰπὲ θεὰ, κριφίων ἐπιμάρτυρα λύχνον ἐρώτων,  
καὶ νύχιον πλωτῆρα θαλασσοπόρων ἡμεαίων,  
καὶ γάμον ἀχλινύοντα, τὸν οὐκ ἶδεν ἀφθιτος Ἥως,  
καὶ Σηστὸν καὶ Ἀβιδὸν ὅπη γάμος ἔννυχος Ἡροῦς.<sup>1</sup>

Here, perhaps, a modern poet might have stayed his hand : not so Musæus ; he has still to say that he will tell of Leander's death, and, in propounding this part of the theme, to speak once more about the lamp :—

λύχνον, ἔρωτος ἄγαλμα, τὸν ὄφελεν αἰθήριος Ζεὺς  
ἐννύχιον μετ' ἄεθλον ἄγειν ἐς ὁμήγουριν ἄστρον  
καὶ μιν ἐπικλῆσαι νυμφοστόλον ἄστρον ἐρώτων.<sup>2</sup>

Seven lines were enough for Homer while explaining the subject of the *Iliad*. Musæus, though his poem is so short, wants more than twice as many. He cannot resist the temptation to introduce decorative passages like the three lines just quoted, which are, moreover, appropriate in a poem that aims at combining the idyllic and epic styles.

After the proem we enter on the story. Sestos and Abydos are divided by the sea, but Love has joined them with an arrow from his bow :—

<sup>1</sup> "Tell, goddess, of the lamp, the confidant of secret love, and of the youth who swam by night to find his bridal-bed beyond the sea, and of the darkened marriage on which immortal morning never shone, and of Sestos and Abydos, where was the midnight wedding of Hero."

<sup>2</sup> "Love's ornament, which Zeus in heaven, after the midnight contest, should have brought into the company of stars, and called it the bride-adorning star of love."



ἡ ἱεὸν φλέξας καὶ παρθένον· οὖνομα δ' αὐτῶν  
ἡμεροῖς τε Λέανδρος ἔην καὶ παρθένος Ἡρώ.<sup>1</sup>

Hero dwelt at Sestos ; Leander lived at Abydos ; and both were "exceeding fair stars of the two cities." By the sea, outside the town of Sestos, Hero had a tower, where she abode in solitude with one old servant, paying her daily orisons to Dame Kupris, whose maiden votary she was, and sprinkling the altars of Love with incense to propitiate his powerful deity. "Still even thus she did not shun his fire-breathing shafts ;" for so it happened that when the festival of Adonis came round, and the women flocked into the town to worship, and the youths to gaze upon the maidens, Hero passed forth that day to Venus' temple, and all the men beheld her beauty, and praised her for a goddess, and desired her for a bride. Leander, too, was there ; and Leander could not content himself, like the rest, with distant admiration :—

The tale of  
Hero and  
Leander.

εἶλε δέ μιν τότε θάμβος, ἀναιδείη, τρόμος, αἰδώς·  
ἔτρεμε μὲν κραδίην, αἰδώς δέ μιν εἶχεν ἁλῶναι·  
θάμβεε δ' εἶδος ἄριστον, ἔρωσ δ' ἀπενόσφισεν αἰδῶ·  
θαρσαλέως δ' ἵπ' ἔρωτος ἀναιδείην ἀγαπάζων  
ἡρέμα ποσσὶν ἔβαινε καὶ ἀντίον ἕστατο κοῦρης.<sup>2</sup>

He met the maiden face to face, and his eyes betrayed his passion ; and she too felt the power of love in secret, and repelled him not, but by her silence and tranquillity encouraged him to hope :—

ὃ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἰάνθη,  
ὅττι πόθον συνέηκε καὶ οὐκ ἀπεσείσατο κοῦρη.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "By setting on fire a youth and a maiden, of whom the names were love-inspiring Leander and virgin Hero."

<sup>2</sup> "Then came upon him astonishment, audacity, trembling, shame ; in his heart he trembled, and shame seized him at having been made captive : yet he marvelled at the faultless form, and love kept shame away ; then manfully by love's guidance he embraced audacity, and gently stepped and stood before the girl."

<sup>3</sup> "And he within himself was glad at heart, because the maiden understood his love, and cast it not from her."

Their meeting in the temple.

So far one hundred and nine lines of the poem have carried us. The following one hundred and eleven lines, nearly a third of the whole, are devoted to the scene in the temple between Hero and her lover. This forms by far the most beautiful section of the tale; for the attention is concentrated on the boy and girl between whom love at first sight has just been born. In the twilight of early evening, in the recesses of the shrine, they stand together, like fair forms carved upon a bas-relief. Leander pleads and Hero listens. The man's wooing, the maiden's shrinking; his passionate insistence, her gradual yielding; are presented in a series of exquisite and artful scenes, wherein the truth of a natural situation is enhanced by rare and curious touches. With genuine Greek instinct the poet has throughout been mindful to bring both lovers clearly before the reader's mental vision, so that a succession of pictures support and illustrate the dialogue, which rises at the climax to a love-duet. The descriptive lines are very simple, like these:—

ἡρέμα μὲν θλίβων ροδοειδέα δάκτυλα κούρης  
βυσσόθεν ἐστονάχιζεν ἀθέσφατον. ἡ δὲ σιωπῇ,  
οὐδ' αὖτε χωμένη, ροδέην ἐξέσπασε χεῖρα.<sup>1</sup>

Or again:—

παρθενικῆς δ' εὐδομον εὐχροον αὐχένα κίσας.<sup>2</sup>

Or yet again:—

ὄφρα μὲν οὖν ποτὶ γαῖαν ἔχεν νεύουσιν ὀπωπὴν,  
τόφρα δὲ καὶ Λεῖανδρος ἐρωμανέσσει προσώποις  
οὐ κάμεν εἰσροῶν ἀπαλόχροον αὐχένα κούρης.<sup>3</sup>

We do not want more than this: it is enough to animate

<sup>1</sup> "Gently pressing the roseate fingers of the maiden, from the depths of his breast he sighed; but she, in silence, as though angered, drew her rosy hand away."

<sup>2</sup> "Kissing the fair perfumed maiden's neck."

<sup>3</sup> "The while she bent her glance upon the ground, Leander tired not with impassioned eyes of gazing at the maiden's smooth-skinned neck."

the plastic figures presented to our fancy. Meanwhile Hero cannot resist the pleadings of Leander, and her yielding is described with beautiful avoidance of superfluous sentiment :—

ἤδη καὶ γλυκίπικρον ἐδέξατο κέντρον ἐρώτων,  
θέρμετο δὲ κραδίην γλυκερῷ πυρὶ παρθένος Ἡρώ,  
κάλλει δ' ἡμερόεντος ἀνεπτοίγητο Λεάνδρου.<sup>1</sup>

A modern poet would have sought to spiritualise the situation : in the hands of the Greek artist it remains quite natural ; it is the beauty of Leander that persuades and subdues Hero to love, and the agitations of her soul are expressed in language which suggests a power that comes upon her from without. At the same time there is no hint of levity or sensuality. Hero cannot be mistaken for a light of love. When the time comes, she will break her heart upon the dead body of the youth who wins her by his passion and his beauty. Leander has hitherto been only anxious to possess her for his own. Hero, as soon as she perceives that he has won the fight, bethinks her with a woman's wisdom of ways and means. Who is the strange man to whom she must abandon herself in wedlock ; and what does he know about her ; and how can they meet ? Therefore she tells him her name and describes her dwelling :—

πύργος δ' ἀμφιβόητος ἐμὸς δόμος οὐρανομήκης  
ὃ ἐνὶ ναιετάουσα σὺν ἀμφιπόλῳ τινὶ μούνῃ  
Σηοστιάδος πρὸ πόλης ὑπὲρ βαθυκύμονας ὄχθας  
γείτονα πόντον ἔχω στιγεραῖς βουλήσιν τοκῶν.  
οἷδέ μοι ἐγγὺς ἔασιν ὁμήλικες, οὐδὲ χορεῖαι  
ἡϊθέων παρέασιν· ἀεὶ δ' ἀνὰ νύκτα καὶ ἡὺ  
ἐξ ἁλὸς ἡνεμόεντος ἐπιβρέμει οὐασιν ἡχώ.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Now she, too, received into her soul the bitter-sweet sting of love, and the heart of maiden Hero was warmed with delicious fire, and before the beauty of love-inspiring Leander she quailed."

<sup>2</sup> "A tower, beset with noises of the sea, and high as heaven, is my home : there I dwell, together with one only servant, before the city-walls of Sestos, above the deep-waved shore, with ocean for my neighbour : such is the stern will of my parents. Nor are there maidens of my age to keep me company, nor dances of young men close by ; but everlastingly at night and morn a roaring from the windy sea assails my ears."

Hero's tower  
and lamp.

Having said so much, shame overtakes her ; she hides her face, and blames her over-hasty tongue. But Leander, pondering how he shall win the stakes of love proposed to him—*πῶς κεν ἔρωτος ἀεθλεύσειεν ἄγῳνα*—is helped at last by Love himself, the wounder and the healer of the heart in one. He bursts into a passionate protestation : “ Maiden, for the love of thee I will cross the stormy waves ; yea, though the waters blaze with fire, and the sea be unsailed by ships. Only do thou light a lamp upon thy tower to guide me through the gloom :—

*ὄφρα νοήσας*  
*ἔσσομαι ὀλκὺς Ἐρωτος ἔχων σέθεν ἀστέρα λύχνον.*<sup>1</sup>

Seeing its spark, I shall not need the north star or Orion. And now, if thou wouldst have my name, know that I am Leander, husband of the fair-crowned Hero.”

Their part-  
ing.

Nothing now remains for the lovers but to arrange the signs and seasons of their future meeting. Then Hero retires to her tower, and Leander returns to Abydos by the Hellespont :—

*παννυχίων δ' ὁάρων κρυφίους ποθέοντες ἀέθλους*  
*πολλάκις ἠρήσαντο μολεῖν θαλαμηπόλον ὄρφνην.*<sup>2</sup>

It may be said in passing that this parting-scene, though briefly narrated, is no less well conducted, *wohl motivirt*, as Goethe would have phrased it, than are all the other incidents of the poem (lines 221-231). The interpretation of the passage turns upon the word *παννυχίδας* (night-festivals), in line 225, which must here be taken to mean the vigil before marriage.

Rapidity of  
narration.

At this point the action turns. Musæus, having to work within a narrow space, has made the meeting and the dialogue between the lovers disproportionate to the length of the whole piece. In this way he secures our sympathy for the youth and maid, whom we learn to know as living persons. He can now

<sup>1</sup> “ Minding it, I shall be a ship of love, having thy lamp for star.”

<sup>2</sup> “ In their desire for the hidden lists of midnight converse, they oftentimes prayed that darkness should descend and lead them to the bridal-bed.”

afford to drop superfluous links, and to compress the tale within strict limits. The cunning of his art is shown by the boldness of the transition to the next important incident. The night and the day are supposed to have passed. We hear nothing of the impatience of Leander or of Hero's flux and reflux of contending feelings. The narrative is resumed just as though the old thread had been broken, and another had been spun; and yet there is no sense of interruption :—

ἤδη κιανόπεπλος ἀνέδραμε νυκτὸς ὀμίχλη  
ἀνδράσιν ἵπνον ἄγουσα καὶ οὐ ποθέοντι Λεάνδρῳ.<sup>1</sup>

The lover's attitude of suspense, waiting at nightfall on the beach for Hero's lamp to burn, is so strongly emphasised in the following lines that we are made to feel how anxiously and yearningly the hours of daylight had been spent by him. No sooner does the spark shine forth than Leander darts forward to the waves, and, having prayed to Love, leaps lively in :—

Leander  
swims the  
Hellespont

ὥς εἰπὼν μελέων ἐρατῶν ἀπιδίστατο πέπλον  
ἀμφοτέραις παλάμῃσιν, ἐψ' δ' ἔσφιγξε καρήνῃ,  
ἡϊόνος δ' ἐξώρτο, δέμας δ' ἐρρύψε θαλάσσῃ,  
λαμπομένου δ' ἔσπενδεν αἰεὶ κατεναντία λύχνου  
αὐτὸς ἐὼν ἐρέτης αὐτόστολος αὐτόματος νηὺς.<sup>2</sup>

Hero meanwhile is on the watch, and when her bridegroom gains the shore, breathless and panting, he finds himself within her arms :—

ἐκ δὲ θυράων  
νυμφίον ἀσθμαίνοντα περιπτίξουσα σιωπῇ  
ἀφροκόμονος ῥιθάμιγγας ἔτι στάζοντα θαλάσσης  
ἤγαγε νυμφοκόμοιο μυχοὺς ἐπὶ παρθενῶνος.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Now the dark-mantled gloom of night ran over the heavens, bringing to mortals sleep, but not to longing Leander."

<sup>2</sup> "So having said, he withdrew from his lovely limbs the mantle with both hands, and bound it on his head, and leapt from the shore, and cast his body on the sea, and ever fared face-forward to the burning lamp, himself the oarsman, self-impelled, a self-directed ship."

<sup>3</sup> "From the door she passed, and silently embraced her panting bridegroom, dripping with the foamy sprinklings of the sea, and led him to the bride-adorning chamber of her maiden hours."

Their  
marriage.

There she washes the stain and saltness of the sea from his body, and anoints him with perfumed oil, and leads him with tender words of welcome to the marriage-bed. The classic poet feels no need of apologising for the situation, nor does he care to emphasise it. The whole is narrated with Homeric directness, contrasting curiously with the romantic handling of the same incident by Marlowe. Yet the point and pathos of clandestine marriage had to be expressed; and to a Greek the characteristic circumstance was the absence of customary ritual. This defect, while it isolated the lovers from domestic sympathies and troops of friends, attracted attention to themselves, and gave occasion to some of the best verses in the poem:—

ἦν γάμος ἀλλ' ἀχόρευτος· ἦν λέχος ἀλλ' ἄτερ ὕμνων·  
οὐ Ζηνίην Ἥρην τις ἐπειφήμησεν αἰδοῖς·  
οὐ δαΐδων ἤττραπτε σέλας θαλαμηπόλον εὐνήν·  
οὐδὲ πολισκάρθμῳ τις ἐπεσκήρτησε χορεία,  
οὐχ ἱμεναῖον αἶσις πατὴρ καὶ πότνυ μῆτηρ·  
ἀλλὰ λέχος στορέσασα τελεσσιγάμοισιν ἐν ὥραις  
σιγῇ πωστὸν ἐπῆξεν, ἐννυμφοκόμησε δ' ὁμίχλῃ,  
καὶ γάμος ἦν ἀπάνειθεν αἰδομένην ἱμεναῖον.  
νῆξ μὲν ἦν κείνοισι γαμοστύλος, οὐδέ ποτ' ἦως  
νύμφιον εἶδε Λεάνδρον ἀριγνώτοις ἐνὶ λέκτροις·  
νήχετο δ' ἀντιπόροιο πάλιν ποτὶ δῆμον Ἀβύδου  
ἐννυχίων ἀκόρητος ἔτι πνείων ἱμεναίων.  
Ἥρῳ δ' ἑλκεσίπεπλος, εἰς λήθοντα τοκῆας,  
παρθένος ἡματὶ νυχίῃ γυνή. Ἀμφότεροι δὲ  
πολλὰ κίς ἠρήσαντο κατελθέμεν ἐς δῖον ἦώ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "There was wedding, but without the ball; there was bedding but without the hymn: no singer invoked bridal Hera; no blaze of torches lit the nuptial couch, nor did the youths and maidens move in myriad mazes of the dance: father and mother sang no marriage chant. But silence spread the bed and strewed the couch, and darkness decked the bride; without hymns of Hymen was the wedding. Night was their bridesmaid, nor did dawn see Leander in the husband's room. He swam again across the straits of Abydos, still breathing of bridal in his soul unsatisfied of joy. Hero, meanwhile, by day a maid, at night a wife, escaped her parents' eyes: both bride and bridegroom oftentimes desired that day should set."

So the night passed, and through many summer nights they tasted the sweets of love, *χλοερόισιν ιαινόμενοι* Leander drowned in Hellespont. *μελέεσσιν* (taking delight in the bloom of their young limbs). But soon came winter, and with winter the sea grew stormy, and ships were drawn up on the beach, and the winds battled with each other in the Hellespontine Straits; and now Hero should have refrained from lighting her lamp, *μιννώριον ἀστέρα λέκτρων* (the short-lived star that lighted them to bed); but love and fate compelled her, and the night of tempest and of destiny arrived. Manfully Leander wrestled with the waves; yet the sea swelled higher; his strength ebbed away; an envious gust blew out the guiding lamp; and so he perished in the waters. The picture of his death-struggle is painted with brief incisive touches. The last two lines have a strange unconscious pathos in them, as though the life and love of a man were no better than a candle:—

καὶ δὴ λύχνον ἄπιστον ἀπέσβεσε πικρὸς ἀήτης  
καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ ἔρωτα πολυτλήτοιο Λεάνδρου.<sup>1</sup>

What remains to be told is but little. The cold gray dawn went forth upon the waste of billows; how gray and comfortless they know who, after lonely watching through night hours, have seen discoloured breakers beat upon a rainy shore. Hero from her turret gazed through the twilight; and there at her feet lay dead Leander, bruised by the rocks and buffeted by slapping waves. She uttered no cry; but tore the embroidered raiment on her breast, and flung herself, face-downward, from the lofty tower. In their death, says the poet after his own fashion, they were not divided:—

ἀλλήλων δ' ἀπόναντο καὶ ἐν πυμάτῳ περ ὀλίθῳ.<sup>2</sup>

This line ends the poem.

<sup>1</sup> "And so the bitter blast extinguished the faithless lamp and the life and love of suffering Leander."

<sup>2</sup> "They enjoyed each other even thus in the last straits of doom."

The  
romantic  
quality of  
the poem.

This is but a simple story. Yet for that very reason it is one of those stories which can never grow old. As Leigh Hunt, after some unnecessary girding at scholars and sculptors, has sung :—

“ I never think of poor Leander's fate,  
And how he swam, and how his bride sat late,  
And watched the dreadful dawning of the light,  
But as I would of two that died last night,  
So might they now have lived, and so have died ;  
The story's heart, to me, still beats against its side.”

What makes it doubly touching is, that this poem of young love and untimely fate was born, like a soul “beneath the ribs of death,” in the dotage and decay of Greek art. I do not know whether it has often been noticed that the qualities of romantic grace and pathos were chiefly appreciated by the Greeks in their decline. It is this circumstance, perhaps, which caused the tales of *Hero and Leander* and *Daphnis and Chloe* to attract so much attention at the time of the Renaissance. Modern students found something akin to their own modes of feeling in the later classics. Are not the colours of the autumn in harmony with the tints of spring ?

Hallam on  
Marlowe's  
*Hero and  
Leander*.

The judicious Hallam, in a famous passage of the *History of Literature*, records his opinion that “it is impossible not to wish that Shakespeare had never written” the sonnets dedicated to Mr. W. H. With the same astounding ἀπειροκαλία, or insensibility to beauty, he ventures to dismiss the *Hero and Leander* of Marlowe as “a paraphrase, in every sense of the epithet, of the most licentious kind.” Yet this severe high-priest of decorum has devoted three pages and a half to the analysis of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which play we have, as he remarks with justice, “more than in any other tragedy, the mere passion of love ; love, in all its vernal promise, full of hope and innocence, ardent beyond all restraint of reason, but tender as it is warm.” What can be said of the critical perceptions of one who finds so strongly marked a moral



separation between the motives of Marlowe's poem and Shakespeare's play?

The truth is that the words used by Hallam to characterise the subject of *Romeo and Juliet* are almost exactly applicable to *Hero and Leander*, after due allowance made for the distinction between the styles of presentation proper to a tragedy in the one case, and in the other to a narrative poem. Reflecting upon this, it is probable that the impartial student will side with Swinburne when he writes: "I must avow that I want and am well content to want the sense, whatever it be, which would enable me to discern more offence in that lovely picture of the union of two lovers in body as in soul than I can discern in the parting of Romeo and Juliet."

Swinburne  
on Mar-  
lowe's poem.

To discuss the morality of Marlowe's Muse is, however, alien to the present purpose. What has to be brought plainly forward is the artistic difference between the methods of Marlowe and Musæus. Hallam, in calling the English *Hero and Leander* a "paraphrase," was hardly less wrong than Warton, who called it a "translation." It is in fact a free and independent reproduction of the story first told by Musæus. Without the poem of Musæus the poem of Marlowe would not have existed; but though the incidents remain unchanged, the whole manner of presenting them, of selecting characteristic details, and of guiding the sympathy and imagination of the reader is altered. In other words, the artistic consciousness had shifted its point of gravity between the ages of Musæus and Marlowe, and a new poem was produced to satisfy the new requirements of the æsthetic ideal. Musæus, as we have already seen, thought it essential to set forth the whole of his subject at the opening in its minutest details: Sestos and Abydos, the marriage-bed on which the morning never shone, the swimming feat of Leander, and the lamp, which was the star of love, till envious fate blew out both love and light and life itself together, all find their proper place in the proemium. In conducting the narrative he is careful to present each

The classi-  
cal epic of  
Musæus.

motive, as it were, from the outside, to cast the light of his imagination upon forms rendered as distinct as possible in their plasticity, just as the sun's light falls upon and renders visible a statue. There is no attempt to spiritualise the subject, to flood it with emotion, thought, and passion, to pierce into its inmost substance, to find the analogue to its implicit feeling in the depth of his own soul, and, by expressing that, to place his readers at the point of view from which he contemplates the beauty of the fable. The poet withdraws his personality, leaving the animated figures he has put upon the stage of fancy, the carefully-prepared situations that display their activity, and the words invented for them, to tell the tale. He can therefore afford to be both simple and direct, brief in descriptive passages, and free from psychological digressions. A few gnomic sentences, here and there introduced, suffice to maintain the reflective character of a meditated work of art. All this is in perfect concord with the Greek conception of art, the sculpturesque ideal.

The  
romantic  
epic of  
Marlowe.

Marlowe takes another course. The three hundred and forty lines, which were enough for Musæus, are expanded into six sestads or cantos, each longer than the whole Greek poem.<sup>1</sup> Yet to this lengthy narrative no prelude is prefixed. Unlike Musæus, Marlowe rushes at once into the story. He does not wait to propound it, or to talk about the fatal lamp, or to describe Hero's tower. That Hero lived in a tower at all, we only discover by accident on the occasion of her visit to the shrine of Venus, and Leander makes his first appearance there, guided by no lamp, but by his own audacity. On the other hand, all descriptions that set free the poet's feeling, are enormously extended. The one epithet *ἱμερόεις* or love-inspiring, for instance, which satisfied Musæus, is amplified by Marlowe through forty lines throbbing with his own deep sense of adolescent beauty. The temple of Venus, briefly alluded to by Musæus, is painted in detail by Marlowe, with a luminous

<sup>1</sup> Marlowe lived to write only the first two sestads.

account of its frescoes, bas-reliefs, and pavements. The first impassioned speech of Leander runs at one breath over ninety-six verses, while mythological episodes and moral reflections are freely interpolated. All the situations, however delicate, so long as they have raised the poet's sense of beauty to enthusiasm, are treated with elaborate and loving sympathy. In presenting them with their fulness of emotion to the reader, Marlowe taxes his inexhaustible invention to the utmost, and permits the luxuriance of his fancy to run riot. The passion which carries this soul of fire and air up to the empyrean, where it moves at ease, sometimes betrays him into what we know as faults of taste. It is as though the love-ache, grown intense, had passed over for a moment into pain, as though the music, seeking for subtler and still more subtle harmonies, had touched at times on discord.

Compared with the Greek poem, this *Hero and Leander* of Marlowe is like some radiant double rose placed side by side with the wild briar whence it sprang by cultivation. The petals have been multiplied, the perfume deepened and intensified, the colours varied in their modulations of a single tint. At the same time something in point of simple form has passed away for ever. The first thing, then, that strikes us in turning from Musæus to Marlowe is that what the Greek poet considered all-important in the presentation of his subject, has been dropped or negligently handled by the English, while the English poet has been prodigal in places where the Greek displayed his parsimony. On looking further, we discover that the modern poet, in all these differences, aims at effects not realised by ancient art. The life and play and actual pulsations of emotion have to be revealed, both as they exist in the subject of the poem and as the poet finds them in his own soul. Everything that will contribute to this main achievement is welcomed by the poet, and the rest rejected. All the motives which had an external statuesque significance for the Greek must palpitate with passion for the English. Those that cannot

Differences  
between  
ancient and  
modern art.

clothe themselves with spirit as with a garment are abandoned. He wants to make his readers feel, not see : if they see at all, they must see through their emotion ; whereas the emotion of the Greek was stirred in him through sight. We do not get very far into the matter, but we gain something, perhaps, by adding that, as sculpture is to painting and music, so is the poetry of Musæus to that of Marlowe. In the former, feeling is subordinate or at most but adequate to form : in the latter, *Gefühl ist alles*.

Tribute of  
praise to  
both poems.

What has just been advanced is stated broadly, and is therefore only accurate in a general sense. For while the Greek *Leander* contains exquisite touches of pure sentiment, so the English *Leander* offers fully perfected pictures of Titianesque beauty. Still, this does not impair the strength of the position : what is really instructive in the comparative study of the two tales of *Hero and Leander* will always be that the elder poem, in spite of its autumnal quality, is classical, the younger, in spite of its most utter paganism, is romantic. To enter into minute criticism of Marlowe's poem would be out of place here ; and, were it included in my programme, I should shrink from this task as a kind of profanation. Those who have the true sense of ideal beauty, and who can rise by sympathy above the commonplaces of everyday life, into the free atmosphere of art, which is nature permeated with emotion, will never forget the prolonged, recurring, complex cadences of that divinest dithyramb poured forth from a young man's soul. Every form and kind of beauty is included in his adoration, and the whole is spiritualised with imagination, ardent and passionate beyond all words.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE GENIUS OF GREEK ART

Separation between the Greeks and us—Criticism—Nature—The Olive  
—Greek Sculpture—Greek Sense of Beauty—Greek Morality—  
Greece, Rome, Renaissance, the Modern Spirit.

THE Greeks had no past: "no hungry generations trod them down": whereas the multitudinous associations of immense antiquity envelop all our thoughts and feelings.<sup>1</sup> "O Solon, Solon," said the priest of Egypt, "you Greeks are always children!" The world has now grown old; we are gray from the cradle onwards, swathed with the husks of outworn creeds, and rocked upon the lap of immemorial mysteries. The travail of the whole earth, the unsatisfied desires of many races, the anguish of the death and birth of successive civilisations, have passed into our souls. Life itself has become a thousandfold more complicated and more difficult for us than it was in the springtime of the world. With the increase of the size of nations, poverty and disease and the struggle for bare existence have been aggravated. How can we then bridge over the gulf which separates us from the Greeks? How shall we, whose souls are aged and wrinkled with the

The youthful genius of the Greeks.

<sup>1</sup> This chapter was written with the purpose of simply illustrating the *aesthetic* spirit of the Greeks. I had no intention of writing a treatise on the spirit of the Greeks as illustrated by their history and philosophy. The last chapter of this volume contains a supplemental treatment of several points suggested in these pages. Pursuing the design explained in the preface, I have not attempted to fuse the two chapters.

long years of humanity, shake hands across the centuries with those young-eyed, young-limbed immortal children? Can we make criticism our Medea—bid the magnificent witch pluck leaves and flowers of Greek poetry and art and life, distilling them for us to bathe therein and regenerate our youth like Æson?

Adolescence  
and age of  
the world.

Like a young man newly come from the wrestling-ground, anointed, chapleted, and very calm, the Genius of the Greeks appears before us. Upon his soul there is no burden of the world's pain; the creation that groaneth and travaileth together has touched him with no sense of anguish; nor has he yet felt sin. The pride and the strength of adolescence are his—audacity and endurance, swift passions and exquisite sensibilities, the alternations of sublime repose and boyish noise, grace, pliancy, and stubbornness and power, love of all fair things and splendours of the world, the frank enjoyment of the open air, free merriment, and melancholy well beloved. Of these adolescent qualities, of this clear and stainless personality, this conscience whole and pure and reconciled to nature, what survives among us now? The imagination must be strained to the uttermost before we can begin to sympathise with such a being. The bleary-eyed mechanic, stifled in a hovel of our sombre northern towns, canopied through all the year with smoke, deafened with wheels that never cease to creak, stiffened by toil in one cramped posture, oblivious of the sunlight and green fields, could scarcely be taught even to envy the pure clear life of art made perfect in humanity, which was the pride of Hellas. His soul is gladdened, if at all, by a glimpse of celestial happiness far off: the hope that went abroad across the earth so many centuries ago has raised his eyes to heaven. How can he comprehend a mode of existence in which the world itself was adequate to all the wants of the soul, and when to yearn for more than life affords was reckoned a disease?

We may tell of blue Ægean waves, islanded with cliffs

that seem less real than clouds, whereon the temples stand, burning like gold in sunset or turning snowy fronts against the dawn. We may paint high porches of the gods, resonant with music and gladdened with choric dances; or describe perpetual sunshine and perpetual ease—no work from year to year that might degrade the body or impair the mind, no dread of hell, no yearning after heaven, but summer-time of youth, and autumn of old age, and loveless death bewept and bravely borne.<sup>1</sup> The life of the schools, the theatre, the wrestling-ground, the law-courts; generous contests on the Pythian or Olympian plains; victorious crowns of athletes or of patriots; Simonidean epitaphs and funeral orations of Pericles for fallen heroes; the prize of martial prowess or poetic skill; the honour paid to the pre-eminence of beauty;—all these things admit of scholar-like enumeration. Or we may recall by fancy the olive-groves of the Academy; discern Hymettus pale against the burnished sky, and Athens guarded by her glistening goddess of the mighty brow—Pallas, who spreads her shield, and shakes her spear above the labyrinth of peristyles and pediments in which her children dwell. Imagination can lead us to the plane-trees on Cephissus' shore, the labours of the husbandmen who garner dues of corn and oil, the galleys in Piræan harbourage. Or with the *Lysis* and the *Charmides* beneath our eyes, we may revisit the haunts of the wrestlers and the runners, true-born Athenians, fresh from the bath and crowned with violets, chaste, vigorous, inured to rhythmic movements of the passions and the soul.

The radiance  
of Greek  
life.

<sup>1</sup> But, while we tell of these good things, we must not conceal the truth that they were planted, like exquisite exotic flowers, upon the black rank soil of slavery. That is the dark background of Greek life. Greek slaves may not have been worse off than other slaves—may indeed most probably have been better treated than the serfs of feudal Germany and Spanish Mexico. Yet who can forget the stories of Spartan Helotry, or the torments of Syracusan stone-quarries or the pale figure of Phædon rescued, true-born Elean as he was, by Socrates from an Athenian brothel?

Criticism  
and the  
historical  
imagination.

Yet after all, when the process of an elaborate culture has thus been toilsomely accomplished, when we have trained our soul to sympathise with that which is so novel and so strange and yet so natural, few of us can fairly say that we have touched the Greeks at more than one or two points. *Novies Styx interfusa coerctet*: "between us and them crawls the nine times twisted stream of Death." The history of the human race is one; and without the Greeks we should be nothing. But just as an old man of ninety is not the same being as the boy of nineteen,—nay, cannot even recall to memory how and what he felt when the pulse of manhood was yet gathering strength within his veins,—even so now civilised humanity looks back upon the youth of Hellas and wonders what she was in that blest time. A few fragments yet remain from which we strive to reconstruct the past. Criticism is the product of the weakness as well as of the strength of our age. In the midst of our activity we have so little that is artistically salient or characteristic in our life, that we are not led astray by our own individuality or tempted to interpret the past wrongly by making it square with the present. Impartial clearness of judgment in scientific research, laborious antiquarian zeal, methodic scrupulousness in preserving the minutest details of local colouring, and an earnest craving to escape from the dreary present of commonplace respectability into the spirit-stirring freedom of the past—these are qualities of the highest value which our century has brought to bear upon history. They make up in some measure for our want of the creative faculties which more productive but less scientific ages have possessed, and enable those who have but little original imagination to enjoy imaginative pleasures at second hand, by living as far as may be in the clear light of antique beauty.

The sea, the hills, the plains, the sunlight of the South, together with some ruins which have peopled Europe with phantoms of dead art, and the reliques of Greek literature, are our guides in the endeavour to restore the past of Hellas. Among



rocks golden with broom-flowers, murmurous with bees, burning with anemones in spring and oleanders in summer, and odorous through all the year with thyme, we first assimilate the spirit of the Greeks. In the silence of mountain valleys, thinly grown with arbutus and pine and oak, open at all seasons to pure air, and breaking downwards to the sea, we understand the apparition of Pan to Pheidippides, and divine the secret of an architecture which aimed at definition before all things. The Bay of Naples, the coast of Sicily, are instinct with the memory of those first settlers, who coasting round the silent promontories, ran their keels upon the shelving shore, and drew them up along the strand, and named the spot Neapolis or Gela. The boys of Rome were yet in the wolf's cavern. Vesuvius was a peaceful hill on which the olive and the vine might slumber. The slopes of Pozzuoli were green with herbs, over which no lava had been poured. Wandering about Sorrento, the spirit of the *Odyssey* is ours. Those fishing-boats with lateen sail are such as bore the heroes from their ten years' toil at Troy. Those shadowy islands caught the gaze of Æneas straining for the promised land. Into such clefts and rents of rock strode Herakles and Jason when they sought the golden apples and the golden fleece. Look down. There gleam the green and yellow dragon-scales, coiled on the basement of the hills, and writhing to each curve and cleavage of the chasm. Is it a dream? Do we in fact behold the mystic snake, or in the twilight do those lustrous orange-trees deceive our eyes? Nay: there are no dragons in the ravine—only thick boughs, and burnished leaves, and snowy bloom, and globes of glittering gold. Above them on the cliff sprout myrtle-rods, sacred to Love, myrtle-branches, with which the Athenians wreathed their swords in honour of Harmodius. Lilies and jonquils and hyacinths stand, each straight upon his stem—a youth, as Greeks imagined, slain by his lover's hand, or dead for love of his own loveliness, or cropped in love's despite by death, that is the foe of love. Scarlet and white anemones are there, some

Southern  
landscape  
and nature.

born of Adonis' blood, and some of Aphrodite's tears. All beauty fades : the flowers of earth, the bloom of youth, man's strength, and woman's grace, all wither and relapse into the loveless and inexorable grave. This the Greeks knew, mingling mirth with melancholy, and love with sadness, their sweetest songs with elegiac melodies.

Youths and  
maidens of  
Sorrento.

Beneath the olive-trees, among the flowers and ferns, move stately maidens and bare-chested youths. Their eyes are starry-softened or flash fire, and their lips are parted to drink in the breath of life. Some are singing in the fields an antique world-old monotone of song. Was not the lay of Linus, the burden of *μακραὶ τὰ δρύες ὦ Μενάλκα* (High are the oak-trees, O Menalcas), some such canzonet as this? These late descendants of Greek colonists are still beautiful—like moving statues in the sunlight and the shadow of the boughs. Yonder tall straight girl, whose pitcher, poised upon her head, might have been filled by Electra or Chrysothemis with lustral waters for a father's tomb, carries her neck as nobly as a Fate of Pheidias. Her body sways upon the hips, where rests her modelled arm ; the ankle and the foot are sights to sit and gaze at through a summer's day. And where, if not here, shall we meet with Hylas and Hyacinth, with Ganymede and Hymenæus, in the flesh? As we pass, the laughter and the singing die away. Bright dresses and pliant forms are lost. We stray onward through the sheen and shade of olive-branches.

The olive-  
tree.

The olive was Athene's gift to Hellas, and Athens carved its leaves and berries on her drachma with the head of Pallas and her owl. The light which never leaves its foliage, silvery beneath and sparkling from the upper surface of burnished green, the delicacy of its stem, which in youth and middle and old age retains the distinction of finely accentuated form, the absence of sombre shadow on the ground beneath its branches, might well fit the olive to be the symbol of the purity of classic art. Each leaf is cut into a lance-head of brilliancy, not jagged or fanciful or woolly like the foliage of northern trees.

There is here no mystery of darkness, no labyrinth of tortuous shade, no conflict of contrasted form. Excess of light sometimes fatigues the eye amid those airy branches, and we long for the repose of gloom to which we are accustomed in our climate. But gracefulness, fertility, power, radiance, pliability, are seen in every line. The spirit of the Greek itself is not more luminous and strong and subtle. The colour of the olive-tree, again, is delicate. Its pearly grays and softened greens in no wise interfere with the lustre which is the true distinction of the tree. Clear and faint like Guido's colours in the Ariadne of St. Luke's at Rome, distinct as the thought in a Greek epigram, the olive-branches are relieved against the bright blue of the sea. The mountain slopes above are clothed by them with light as with a raiment: clinging to knoll and vale and winding creek, rippling in hoary undulations to the wind, they wrap the hills from feet to flank in lucid haze. Above the olives shine bare rocks in steady noon or blush with dawn and evening.<sup>1</sup> Nature is naked and beautiful beneath the sun—like Aphrodite, whose raiment falls waist-downward to her sandals on the sea, but whose pure breasts and forehead are unveiled.

Nature is thus the first, chief element by which we are enabled to conceive the spirit of the Greeks. The key to their mythology is here. Here is the secret of their sympathies, the wellspring of their deepest thoughts, the primitive potentiality of all they have achieved in art. What is Apollo but the magic of the sun whose soul is light? What is Aphrodite but the love-charm of the sea? What is Pan but the mystery of nature, the felt and hidden want pervading all? What again are those elder, dimly-discovered deities, the Titans and the brood of Time, but forces of the world as yet beyond the touch and ken of human sensibilities? But

Greek  
mythology.

<sup>1</sup> See the introduction to my chapter on Athens in *Sketches in Italy and Greece* for the characteristic quality given to Attic landscape by gray limestone mountain ranges.

nature alone cannot inform us what that spirit was. For though the Greeks grew up in scenes which we may visit, they gazed on them with Greek eyes, eyes different from ours, and dwelt upon them with Greek minds, minds how unlike our own! Unconsciously, in their long and unsophisticated infancy, the Greeks absorbed and assimilated to their own substance that loveliness which it is left for us only to admire. Between them and ourselves—even face to face with mountain, sky, and sea, unaltered by the lapse of years—flow the rivers of death and Lethe, and the mists of thirty centuries of human life are woven like a veil. To pierce that veil, to learn even after the most partial fashion how they transmuted the splendours of the world into æsthetic forms, is a work which involves the further interrogation of their sculpture and their literature.

Motives  
from Greek  
plastic art.

The motives of that portion of Greek sculpture which brings us close to the incident of Greek life are very simple. A young man binding a fillet round his head; a boy drawing a thorn from his foot; a girl who has been wounded in the breast, raising her arm to show where the sword smote her; an athlete bending every sinew to discharge the quoit; a line of level-gazing youths on prancing horses, some faring forward with straight eyes, one turning with bridle-hand held lightly to encourage his companion, another with loose mantle in the act to mount, others thrown back to rein upon their haunches passionate steeds; a procession of draped maidens bearing urns:—such are the sculptured signs by which we read the placid physical fulfilment of Greek life. That the serenity of satisfied existence is an end in itself and that death in the plenitude of vigour is desirable, the reliefs of Pheidias and the Æginetan marbles teach us. In these simple but consummate works of art the beauty of mere health, animal enjoyment, temperance, mental vigour, and heroic daring mingle and create one splendour of a human being sensitive to all influences and vital in every faculty. Excess can nowhere be

discovered. Compare with these forms for a moment the Genii painted by Michael Angelo upon the roof of the Sistine Chapel. Over them has passed the spirit with its throes: *la maladie de la pensée* is there. Of no Phœbus and no Pallas are they the servants; but ministers of prophets and sibyls, angels of God fulfilling His word, they incarnate the wrestlings and the judgments and the resurrections of the soul. Now take a banquet-scene from some Greek vase. Along the cushioned couch lie young men, naked, crowned with myrtles: in their laps are women, and at their sides broad jars of honeyed wine. A winged Erôs hovers over them, and their lips are opened to sing a song of ancient love. Yet this is no forecast of Borgia revels in Rome, or of the French Regent's Parc aux Cerfs. When Autolycus entered the symposium of Xenophon, all tongues were stricken dumb; man gazed at man in wonder at his bloom of adolescence. When Charmides, heading the troop of wrestlers, joined Socrates in the palæstra, the soul of the philosopher was troubled; he saw the boy's breast within the tunic, and blushed, and felt his heart aflame. Simætha, in the *Pharmaceutria* of Theocritus, beheld the curls of youths on horseback like laburnum-flowers, and their bosoms whiter than the moon.

Greek and  
Renaissance  
art.

We need not embark on antiquarian, or metaphysical, or historical discussions in order to understand the sense of Beauty which was inherent in the Greeks. Little hints scattered by the wayside are far more helpful. Take, for example, the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, and after reading the speech of the Dikaïos Logos, stand beneath the Athlete of Lysippus,<sup>1</sup> in the Braccio Nuovo of the Vatican. "Fresh and fair in beauty-bloom you shall pass your days in the wrestling-

Greek adolescence and  
Greek statues—the  
Apoxymenon.

<sup>1</sup> This statue, usually called the Apoxyomenos, may possibly be a copy in marble of the Athlete of Lysippus which Tiberius wished to remove from the Baths of Agrippa. The Romans were so angry at the thought of being deprived of their favourite, that Tiberius had to leave it where it stood.

ground, or run races beneath the sacred olive-trees, crowned with white reed, in company with a pure-hearted friend, smelling of bindweed and leisure hours and the white poplar that sheds her leaves, rejoicing in the prime of spring, when the plane-tree whispers to the lime." This life the Dikaïos Logos offers to the young Athenian, if he will forego the law-courts and the lectures of the sophists and the house of the hetaira. This life rises above us imaged in the sculptor's marble. The athlete, tall and stately, tired with running, lifts one arm, and with his strigil scrapes away the oil with which he has anointed it. His fingers hold the die that tells his number in the race. Upon his features there rests no shade of care or thought, but the delicious languor of momentary fatigue, and the serenity of a nature in harmony with itself. A younger brother of the same lineage is the Adorante of the Berlin Museum. His eyes and arms are raised to heaven. Perfect in humanity, beneath the lightsome vault of heaven he stands and prays—a prayer of joy and calm thanksgiving, a Greek prayer—no Roman adoration with veiled eyes and muttering lips, no Jewish prostration with the putting off of sandals on the holy ground, no Christian genuflexion like the bending of wind-smitten reeds beneath the spirit-breath of sacraments. Iamos in the mid-waves of Alpheus might have prayed thus when he heard the voice of Phoebus calling to him and promising the twofold gift of prophecy. All the statues of the athletes bear the seal and blossom of *σωφροσύνη*—that truly Greek virtue of moderation and self-restraint, the correlative in morals to the passion for Beauty. "When I with justice on my lips flourished," says the Dikaïos Logos, "and modesty was held in honour, then a boy's voice was not heard; but they went orderly through the streets in bands together from their quarters to the harp-player's school, uncloaked and barefoot, even though it snowed like meal." Of this sort are the two wrestling boys at Florence, whose heads and faces form in outline the ellipse which is the basis of all beauty, and

The Adorante, and athletic statues.

whose strained muscles exhibit the chord of masculine vigour vibrating with tense vitality. If we in England seek some living echo of this melody of curving lines, we must visit the water-meadows where boys bathe in early morning, or the playgrounds of our public schools in summer, or the banks of the Isis when the eights are on the water, or the riding-schools of young soldiers. We cannot reconstitute the elements of Greek life; but here and there we may gain hints for adding breath and pulse and movement to Greek sculpture.

The charm which the simplest things acquired under the hand of a Greek artificer may be seen in the adornment of a circular hand-mirror.<sup>1</sup> Ivy-branches, dividing both ways from the handle, surround its rim with a delicate tracery of sharp-cut leaf and corymb. The central space is occupied by four figures—on the right the boy Dionysus, who welcomes his mother in heaven, on the left Phœbus and a young Paniscus playing on the double pipes. Grace can go no further than in the attitude and the expression of this group. Dionysus is thrown backward; both his arms are raised to encircle the neck of Semele, who bends to kiss his upturned lips. A necklace with pendant balls defines the throat of the stripling where it meets his breast, suggesting by some touch beyond analysis the life that pulses in his veins. He has armlets too below the elbow, and his rich hair ripples in ringlets between cheek and shoulder. The little Paniscus is seated, attending only to his music, with such childish earnestness as shows that his whole soul goes forth in piping. Phœbus, half-draped and lustrous, stands erect beside a slender shaft of laurel planted on the ground. Such are the delights of Paradise to which, as Greeks imagined, a deity might welcome his earthly mother, leading her by the hand from Hades. It would be easy enough to fill a volume with such descriptions—to unlock the cabinets of

The figures  
on a hand-  
mirror.

<sup>1</sup> Engraved in Müller's *Denkmäler der alten Kunst*, Plate XLI.

gems and coins, or to linger over vases painted with the single figure of a winged boy in tender red upon their blackness, and showing the word ΚΑΛΟΣ negligently written at the side.<sup>1</sup>

Deities of  
the erotic  
group.

But it is more to the purpose to note in passing that delicate perception of associated qualities which led the Greeks to maintain a sympathy between cognate deities, while distinguishing to the utmost their specific attributes. Aphrodite, Erôs, Dionysus, Hermes, Hermaphrodite, the Graces, the Nymphs, the Genius of Death—these, for example, though carefully individualised, are still of one kindred. They blend and mingle in a concord of separate yet interpenetrating beauties. Between the radiant Aphrodite of Melos, who in her triumphant attitude seems to be an elder sister of the brazen-winged Victory of Brescia, and the voluptuous Aphrodite Callipygos,<sup>2</sup> a whole rhythm of finely modulated forms may be drawn out, each one of which corresponds to some mood or moment of the enamoured soul. Her immortal son in the Erôs of Pheidias<sup>3</sup> is imaged as the “first of gods,” θεῶν πρῶτιστος, upstarting in his slenderness of youth from Chaos—the keen fine light of dawn dividing night from day. In the Praxitelean Cupid,

“that most perfect of antiques,  
They call the Genius of the Vatican,  
Which seems too beauteous to endure itself  
In this rough world—”

he becomes the deity described by Plato in the *Phædrus*, an incarnation of the tenderest passion, tinged, in spite of his own radiance, with sadness. What thought has made him

<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommon to find jars with καλὸς ὁ παῖς, καλὸς Δινομένης, and so forth, inscribed upon them. They were possibly intended for complimentary presents. Lovers scrawled similar expressions upon trees and walls.

<sup>2</sup> Neapolitan Museum.

<sup>3</sup> British Museum.



sorrowful and bowed his head? Perhaps Theognis can tell us:<sup>1</sup>—

ἄφρονες ἄνθρωποι καὶ νήπιοι, οἷτε θανόντας  
κλαίουσ' οἱδ' ἥβης ἄνθος ἀπολλύμενον.

The winged boy, again, bending his bow against the hearts of lovers, with his lion's skin beside him,<sup>2</sup> is the Erōs of Agathon—he who delights to walk delicately upon the tender places of the soul. Next we find him asleep upon his folded pinions, the mischievous child who rewarded Anacreon's hospitality by wounding him, and who gave to the thirsty heart of Meleager scalding tears to drink. How in the last place are we to distinguish Love from Harpocrates, the silent, with one finger on his lip?

Turn next to Hermes. When the herald of Olympus Hermes. met Priam midway between Troy-town and Achilles' tent, he was, says Homer,

νεηνίη ἀνδρὶ εἰκώς,  
πρῶτον ἱπηνίτη, τοῦπερ χαριεστάτη ἥβη,—

"like a young man, with budding beard, whose bloom is in the prime of grace." This adolescent loveliness belongs throughout to Hermes. As the genius of the gymnasium,<sup>3</sup> he is a divinised athlete, scarcely to be distinguished from the quoit-throwers and the runners he protects. The Hermes, who woos a nymph with his arm around her waist,<sup>4</sup> has Persuasion for his parent. Again the seated Hermes with wings upon his ankles is the swiftness of auroral light incarnate. Of all the series of statues dedicated to this god, the most supreme in loveliness is the Hermes of Praxiteles, lately discovered at Olympia. Nor lastly, when, with chlamys

<sup>1</sup> "Ah, vain and thoughtless men, who wail the dead,  
But not one tear for youth's frail blossom shed!"

<sup>2</sup> Of this statue there are many slightly different copies. The best is in the Vatican.

<sup>3</sup> See the so-called Antinous of the Belvedere.

<sup>4</sup> Engraved in Clarac, *Musée de Sculpture*, Planches, vol. iv. pl. 666 c.

thrown upon his shoulder and petasos slung from his neck, he leads souls to Hades, caduceus in hand, has he lost this quality of youth and lustre. He upon Aphrodite begat Hermaphrodite. Their union—the union of athletic goodliness and consummate womanhood—produced a blending of two beauties forgotten by an oversight of nature. There exists a Term or Hermes<sup>1</sup> which combines Aphrodite, Priapus, and Hermaphrodite in one—three heads upon a common pedestal—forming a trinity of sensuous joy.

Dionysus.

How various again is Bacchus, passing from the stately mildness of the bearded Indian god to the luxuriant wantonness of Phales, the “night-wandering reveller”! At one time you can scarcely distinguish him from young Apollo or young Herakles; at another his brows and tresses have the chastity of Love; again he assumes the voluptuous form which befits the sire by Aphrodite of Priapus. The fascination of the grape-juice lends itself to all qualities that charm the soul of man. Yet another of these cognate deities may be mentioned. That is the Genius of Eternal Slumber,<sup>2</sup> reclining with arms folded above his head, upright against a tree. To judge by his attitude he might be Bacchus, wine-drowsy, as in a statue of the gallery at Florence. Looking at his long tresses, we call him Love: and what deities are of closer kin than Love and Death? His stately form, not unlike that of Phœbus, makes us exclaim in Æschylean language *ὦ θάνατε παῖάν* (O Death, the Healer!) But he is stronger and more perdurable, less swift to move, less light of limb, than any of these. It was a deep and touching intuition of the Greeks which prompted them to ascribe these kinships to Death. Who know even now whether the winged and sworded Genius of the Ephesus column be Love or Death? To trace such analogies further would be fanciful: it is enough to pluck

The genius  
of sleep and  
death.

<sup>1</sup> Engraved in Clarac, *Musée de Sculpture*, Planches, vol. iv. pl. 613.

<sup>2</sup> Louvre.

at random a few blossoms, and to scatter them for lovers. To Winckelmann and the antiquaries may be left the accurate distinctions of the Greek deities. Without seeking to confound these, but rather studying them most carefully, we may yet discern by passing hints that purity of tact which enabled the Greeks to interpret in their statuary every *nuance* of feeling and of fancy, and to mark by subtlest suggestions their points of agreement as well as of divergence.

When Hippolytus in Euripides first appears upon the Hippolytus. scene, he greets Artemis with these words :—

“Lady, for thee, this garland have I woven  
Of wilding flowers, plucked from an unshorn meadow,  
Where neither shepherd dares to feed his flock,  
Nor ever scythe hath swept, but through the grasses  
Unshorn in spring the bee pursues her labours,  
And maiden modesty with running rills  
Waters the garden.”

Before the Meleager of the Vatican, so calm and strong and redolent of forest odours, this orison rings in our memory, and the Diana of the Louvre seems ready to spring forth, and loose her hind, and call on the hero to hunt with her. The life of woods and mountains was divined and interpreted with exquisite sensibility by the Attic sculptors. Children of the earth, and conscious of their own recent birth from the bosom of the divine in nature, they loved all fair and fresh things of the open world fraternally. Therefore they could carve the mystery of the Praxitelean Faun,<sup>1</sup> whose subtle smile is a lure for souls, and the voluptuous sleep of the Barberini Faun,<sup>2</sup> who seems to have but half escaped from elemental existence, and still to own some kindred with unconscious things. The joy of the shepherd who carries on his back a laughing child at Naples; the linked arms of Bacchus and Ampelus; the young Triton<sup>3</sup>

Statues of  
Meleager,  
Artemis,  
Fauns, etc.

<sup>1</sup> The Capitol.

<sup>2</sup> Glyptothek, Munich.

<sup>3</sup> The Vatican.

Greek feeling for nature.

who blows his horn over the crests of the waves, and calls upon his brethren the billows to rejoice with him, as he bears his nymph away; the subtle charm of double life in Hermaphrodite, in whom two sexes are hidden, like a bitter and a sweet almond in one beautiful but barren husk; the frank sensuality of Silenus and Priapus; the dishevelled hair and quivering flanks of Mænads; the laughter of Erôs wreathed around with coils of the enamoured dolphin's tail;<sup>1</sup> the pride of the eagle soaring heavenward with Ganymede among his plumes: from tokens like these, together with the scenes of the *Bacchæ* and the *Cyclops* of Euripides, the Idylls of Theocritus, and the dedicatory epigrams of the Anthology, we learn of what sort was the sympathy of the Greeks for nature. Their beautiful humanity is so close to the mother ever youthful of all life, to the full-breasted earth, that they seem calling through their art to the woods and waves and rivers, crying to their brethren that still tarry: "Come forth, and be like us; begin to feel and know your happiness; put on the form of flesh in which the world's soul reaches consciousness"! Humanity defined upon the borderland of nature is the life of all Greek sculpture. Even the gods are films of fleshly form emergent on the surface of the elements. The circle of the sun dilates, and Phœbus grows into distinctness with the glory round him; out of the liquid ether gaze the divine eyes of Zeus; Poseidon rises breast-high from the mirrors of the sea. Man for the first time conscious of his freedom, yet clinging still to the breasts that gave him suck, like a flower rooted to the kindly earth, expresses all his thought and feeling in the language of his own shape. "The Greek Spirit," says Hegel, "is the plastic artist forming the stone into a work of art." And this work of art is invariably the image of a man or woman. The most sublime aspirations, the subtlest intuitions, the darkest forebodings, the audacities of passion,

<sup>1</sup> Naples.

the freedom of the senses, put on personality in Hellas and assume a robe of carnal beauty. In Egypt and the Orient humanity lay still upon "the knees of a mild mystery." The Egyptians had not discovered the magic word by means of which the world might be translated into the language of mankind: their art still remained within the sphere of symbolism which excludes true sympathy. The Jews had concentrated their thought upon moral phenomena: in their jealousy of the abstract purity of the soul they banned the arts as impious.

Theognis tells us that when the Muses and the Graces came down from Olympus to the marriage-feast of Cadmus and Harmonio, they sang a song with this immortal burden: <sup>1</sup>—

Greek conception of the beautiful.

*ὄττι καλὸν, φίλον ἐστὶ· τὸ δ' οὐ καλὸν οὐ φίλον ἐστίν.*

"What is fair, we love: what is not fair, we love not."

This strikes the keynote to the music of the Greek genius. Beauty is the true province of the Greeks, their indefeasible domain. But their conception of beauty was both more comprehensive and more concrete than any which a modern race, perturbed by the division of the flesh and spirit, conscious of Jewish no less than Greek tradition, can attain to. When Goethe expressed his theory of life in the following couplet:—

"Im Ganzen Guten Schönen  
Resolut zu leben:" <sup>2</sup>

he supplied us with a correct definition of the spirit which governed Hellas. Beauty to the Greeks was one aspect of the universal synthesis, commensurate with all that is fair in manners and comely in morals. It was the harmony of man with nature in a well-balanced and complete humanity, the bloom of health upon a conscious being, satisfied, as flowers

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. p. 251, for an English verse translation of this line.

<sup>2</sup> "To live with steady purpose in the whole, the Good, the Beautiful." These two lines have been misquoted—Schönen being exchanged for Wahren, Beauty for Truth.

and beasts and stars are satisfied, with the conditions of temporal existence. It was the joy-note of the whole world, heard and echoed by the sole being who could comprehend it—Man. That alone was beautiful which uttered a sound in unison with the whole; and all was good which had this quality of concord. To be really beautiful was to be an integral part of the world's symphony, to be developed fully in all parts, without an undue preference for the soul before the body or for the passions before the reason—to maintain the rhythm and the measure and the balance of those faculties which characterise man, nature's masterpiece. The profounder reaches of this thought were explored by philosophers, who figured the soul as a harmony, who conceived of God as the Idea of Beauty, or who, like Marcus Aurelius, defined virtue to be a living and enthusiastic sympathy with nature. In the region of social life it led the Greeks to treat the State as an organic whole, which might be kept in preservation by the balance of its several forces. In the sphere of religion it produced a race of gods, each perfect in his individuality, distinct and self-contained, but blending, like the colours of the prism, in the white light of Zeus, who was the whole.<sup>1</sup> In actual life it facilitated the development of characters which, by the free expansion of personality and by a conscious culture, were themselves consummate works of art. Just as the unity of the Greek religion was not the unity of the One but of the Many blent and harmonised in the variety that we observe in nature, so the ideal of Greek life imposed no commonplace conformity to one fixed standard on individuals, but each man was encouraged to complete and realise the type of himself to the utmost. Pericles devoted his energy to the perfecting of statesmanship and became the incarnation of the Athenian

Ideal of life.

<sup>1</sup> The Greek Pantheon, regarded from one point of view, represents an exhaustive psychological analysis. Nothing in human nature is omitted: but each function and each quantity of man is deified. To Zeus as the supreme reason all is subordinated.

spirit; Pindar was a poet through and through; for the Olympian victor it was enough to be a splendid animal; Pheidias lived in concord with the universe by his exclusive devotion to his art. Thus formed and modelled to the utmost perfection each of his own kind, these characters, when contemplated together from a distance, like the deities of Olympus, present, in the harmony that springs from difference, an ideal of humanity. The Greek no less than the Christian might need to cut off his right hand,—to debar himself like Pericles from the pleasures of society,—or to cast aside the sin that doth so easily beset us—like Socrates who trampled under foot his sensual instincts,—for the attainment of that self-evolution which gave him the right to be one note in the concord of the whole, one colour in the prism of humanity. The one thing needful to him was, not belief in the unseen, nor of necessity holiness, but a firm resolve to comprehend and cultivate his own capacity, and thus to add his quota to the sum of beauty in the world.

The Greeks were essentially a nation of artists. Of the infinite attributes of God, of the infinite qualities of the whole, they clearly apprehended Beauty. *That* they conceived largely and liberally, not narrowly, as we are wont to do. And like consummate craftsmen, they did thoroughly whatsoever in the region of things plastic their hands found to do—so thoroughly that men have only done the work again in so far as they have followed the Greek rule. When we speak of the Greeks as an æsthetic nation, this is what we mean. Guided by no supernatural revelation, with no Mosaic law for conduct, they trusted their *αἰσθησις* (percipient reason), delicately trained and preserved in a condition of the utmost purity. This tact is the ultimate criterion in all matters of art—a truth which we recognise in our use of the word æsthetic, though we too often attempt to import the alien elements of metaphysical dogmatism and moral prejudice into the sphere of beauty. This tact was also for the Greeks the ultimate criterion of

A nation of  
artists.

Health  
physical and  
moral.

ethics. *Ῥγίαίνειν μὲν ἄριστον ἀνδρὶ θνατῷ* (health is the best blessing for mortal man), says Simonides.<sup>1</sup> A man in perfect health of mind and body, enjoying the balance of mental, moral, and physical qualities, which health implies, carried within himself the norm and measure of propriety. Those were the days when "love was an unerring light, and joy its own security." What we call the conscience, our continual reference to the standard of the Divine will, scarcely existed for the Greek. But instead of it he had for a 'guide this true artistic sensibility, developed by centuries of training, fortified by traditional canons of good taste and prudence, and subject to continual correction by reciprocal comparison and dialectical debate. The lawgiver, the sculptor, the athlete, the statesman, the philosopher, the poet, the warrior, the musician, each added something of his own to the formation of a *κοινὴ αἴσθησις*, or common taste, by which the individual might regulate his instincts.

Greek  
ethics.

To suppose that the Greeks were not a highly moralised race is perhaps the strangest misconception to which religious prejudice has ever given rise. If their morality was æsthetic and not theocratic, it was none the less on that account humane and real. The difficulty for the critic is to seize exactly that which is Hellenic—enduring and common to the race, not transient and due to individuals—in their religion and their ethics. In order to appreciate the first fine flavour of the Greek intellect it is necessary to go back to Homer, who represents a period when the instincts of the Hellenes had not been sophisticated by philosophical reflection or vitiated by contact with Asiatic luxury. Homer joins hands with Pheidias and Aristophanes and Sophocles in a chain of truly Greek tradition. But side by side with them there runs a deeper and more mystic strain. The blood-justice of the Eumenides, the asceticism of Pythagoras, the purificatory rites of Empedocles

<sup>1</sup> See above, vol. i. p. 284, for a translation of this Scolion, attributed to Simonides.



and Epimenides, the fetichistic belief in a jealous God, and the doctrine of hereditary guilt in Theognis, Herodotus, and Solon, are fragments of primitive or Asiatic superstition unharmonised with the serene element of the Hellenic spirit. At the same time the orgiastic cult of Dionysus, and the voluptuous worship of the Corinthian Aphrodite are intrusions from without. To eliminate such cruder moral and religious notions was the impulse of the vigorous Greek mind. Yet at one critical moment of history mysticism attained a titanic development and bid fair to force the Hellenic genius into uncongenial regions. The Persian war, by its lesson of a mortal peril escaped miraculously, quickened the spiritual convictions of the race.<sup>1</sup> It was then that Æschylus produced his tragedy of *Retribution*, whereof the motto is τῷ δράσαντι παθεῖν (he who sins must suffer), and Pindar sounded with an awful sense of mystery the possible abysses of a future life. Greece, after the struggle with Xerxes, passed through a period of feverish exaltation, in which her placid contemplation of the beauty of the world was interrupted. She, whose vocation it was to see only by the light of the serene and radiant sun, seemed on the verge of becoming a clairvoyante. But the balance was soon righted. Even in Pindar, moral mysticism is, as it were, encysted, like an alien deposit, in the more vital substance of æsthetic conceptions. Sophocles corrects the gloomy extravagance of Æschylus. The law of

Influence of  
the Persian  
war.

<sup>1</sup> It would form the subject of a curious psychological treatise to trace the growth of the morality of Nemesis and the Divine φθόνος (envy) in the earlier Greek authors, its purification by Æschylus, and still further subsequent refinement by Sophocles, finally its rejection by Plato, who says emphatically: "Envy has no place in the heavenly choir." A childish fear of the divine government pervaded the Greeks of the age of Herodotus. This by the Dramatists was exalted to a conception of the holy and the jealous God. But the good sense of the Greeks led the philosophers to eliminate from their theory of the world even the sublime theosophy of Æschylus. The soul of man, as analysed by Plato in the *Republic*, has only to suffer from the inevitable consequences of its own passions. Plato theorises the humanity implicit in Homer.

Clarifica-  
tion of the  
Attic intel-  
lect.

tragedy in Sophocles is no longer that the doer of a deed must suffer, but that he who offends unwittingly will be accounted innocent. Euripides shifts the ground of moral interest from religious beliefs to sophistical analysis. Meanwhile Aristophanes, the true Athenian conservative, is equally opposed to metaphysical subtleties and to superstitious fancies; while Socrates directs his polemic against sciolism in philosophy and childishness in mythology, without thinking it worth while to attack the *δεισιδαιμονία* (fear of the supernatural) of the mystics. In Plato's ethics the highest altitude of sane Greek speculation is attained. Aristophanes reflects the clearest image of Greek versatility and cheerfulness. Pericles, freed by Anaxagoras from foolish fears, realises the genuine Greek life of cheerful, self-reliant activity. The drama of Sophocles sets forth a complete view of human destiny as conceived by the most perfect of Greek intellects. Antigone dares to trust her own sense of what is right in opposition to unnatural law. Œdipus suffers no further than his own quality of rashness justifies. When we arrive at Aristotle, who yields the abstract of all that previously existed in the Greek mind, we see that the scientific spirit has achieved a perfect triumph. His science is the correlative in the region of pure thought to the Art which in Sculpture had pursued an uninterrupted course of natural evolution.

Imperfect  
evolution  
of the con-  
science.

In the adolescent age of the Greek Genius, mankind, not having yet arrived at spiritual self-consciousness, was still as sinless and simple as any other race that lives and dies upon the globe, forming a part of the natural order of the world. The sensual impulses, like the intellectual and the moral, were then held void of crime and harmless. Health and good taste controlled the physical appetites of man, just as the appetites of animals are regulated by unerring instinct. In the same way a standard of moderation determined moral virtue and intellectual excellence. But in addition to this protective check upon the passions, a noble sense of the beautiful, as that

which is balanced and restrained within limits, prevented the Greeks of the best period from diverging into Asiatic extravagance of pleasure. Licence was reckoned barbarous, and the barbarians were slaves by nature (*φύσει δοῦλοι*): Hellenes, born to be free men, took pride in temperance. Their moderation, coextensive as a protective virtue with the whole of their sense of beauty, was essentially Greek—the quality beloved by Phœbus, in whom was no dark place nor any flaw. With the Romans, humanity, not having yet transcended the merely natural order, remaining unconscious of a higher religious ideal, and at the same time uncontrolled by exquisite Greek sense of fitness, began to wax wanton. To the state of Paradisal innocence succeeded the Fall. The bestial side of our mixed nature encroached upon the spiritual, and the sense of beauty was perturbed by lust. That true health, without which the tact of the percipient reason is a false guide, failed; no fine law of taste corrected appetite. It was at this moment that Christianity convicted mankind of sin. The voice of God was heard crying in the garden. The unity of man with nature was abruptly broken. Flesh and spirit were defined and counterposed. Man, abiding far from God in his flesh, sought after God in his spirit. His union with God was no longer an actual state of mundane innocence, but a distant, future, dim, celestial possibility, to be achieved by the sacrifice of this fair life of earth. “Your lives are hid with Christ in God.” Together with this separation of the flesh and spirit wrought by Christianity, came the abhorrence of beauty as a snare, the sense that carnal affections were tainted with sin, the unwilling toleration of sexual love as a necessity, the idealisation of celibacy and solitude. At the same time humanity acquired new faculties and wider sensibilities. A profounder and more vital feeling of the mysteries of the universe arose. Our life on earth was seen to be a thing by no means rounded in itself and perfect, but only one term of an infinite and unknown series. It was henceforward im-

Greek  
temperance  
and Roman  
licence.

Advent of  
Christianity.

possible to translate the world into the language of purely æsthetic form. This stirring of the spirit marks the transition of the ancient to the modern world.

Confused  
conscience  
of the Re-  
naissance

At the time of the Renaissance the travail was well-nigh over; the lesson had been learned; mankind began to resent the one-sidedness of monastic Christianity, and to yearn once more for the fruit and flowers of the garden which was Greece. Yet the spirit and the flesh still remained in unreconciled antagonism. Over the gate of Eden the arm of the Seraph waved his terrible sword. But humanity in rebellion, while outcast from God and convicted of sin, would not refrain from plucking the pleasure of the sense. This was the time of the insolence of the flesh, when Antichrist sat in St. Peter's chair, and when man, knowing his nakedness, submitted to the fascinations of the siren, Shame. The old health of the Greeks was gone: to recover that was impossible. Christ crowned with thorns, the Sabbaths and ablutions of the Jews, the "thundrous vision" of St. Paul had intervened and fixed a gulf between Hellas and modern Europe. In that age the love of beauty became a tragic disease like the plague which Aphrodite sent in wrath on Phædra. Even Michael Angelo at the end of a long life spent in the service of the noblest art, remembering Savonarola, felt constrained to write:—

"Now hath my life across a stormy sea,  
Like a frail bark, reached that wide port where all  
Are bidden ere the final judgment fall,  
Of good and evil deeds to pay the fee.  
Now know I well how that fond phantasy,  
Which made my soul the worshipper and thrall  
Of earthly art, is vain; how criminal  
Is that which all men seek unwillingly.  
Those amorous thoughts which were so lightly dressed,  
What are they when the double death is nigh?  
The one I know for sure, the other dread.  
Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest  
My soul, that turns to His great love on high,  
Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread."

In his work sculpture is forced to express what lies beyond its province—the throes and labour of the spirit. Michael Angelo was not a plastic character in the sense in which Hegel used this phrase. His art reflects the combat of his nature and his age; whence comes what people call its extravagance and emphasis. Raphael from the opposite side introduced Pagan form and feeling into his purely religious work of art; whence came what people call his decadence. Puritan England, Inquisition-ridden Spain, and critical Germany, offer still more permanent signs of this deep-seated division in the modern world between the natural instincts and the spiritual aspirations of humanity. Even to the present day this division distorts our sense of beauty and prevents our realising an ideal of art.

After all, the separation between the Greeks and us is due to something outside us rather than within—principally to the Hebraistic culture we receive in childhood. We are taught to think that one form of religion contains the whole truth, and that one way of feeling is right, to the exclusion of the humanities and sympathies of races no less beloved of God and no less kindred to ourselves than were the Jews. At the same time the literature of the Greeks has for the last three centuries formed the basis of our education; their thoughts and sentiments, enclosed like precious perfumes in sealed vases, spread themselves abroad and steep the soul in honey-sweet aromas. Some will always be found, under the conditions of this double culture, to whom Greece is a lost fatherland, and who, passing through youth with the *mal du pays* of that irrecoverable land upon them, may be compared to visionaries, spending the nights in golden dreams and the days in common duties.<sup>1</sup> Has then the modern man no method for making

The Nostal-  
gia for  
Hellas.

<sup>1</sup> With what purity of style and feeling has Landor not expressed this nostalgia of the poet's soul for Hellas! These lines are a prelude to his volume, *The Hellenics*—

Come back, ye wandering Muses, come back, home.  
Ye seem to have forgotten where it lies:

Assimila-  
tion of the  
Greek spirit.

the Hellenic tradition vital instead of dream-like—invigorating instead of enervating? There is indeed this one way only—to be natural. We must imitate the Greeks, not by trying to reproduce their bygone modes of life and feeling, but by approximating to their free and fearless attitude of mind. While frankly recognising that much of their liberty would for us be licence, and that the moral progress of the race depends on holding with a firm grasp what the Greeks had hardly apprehended, we ought still to emulate their spirit by cheerfully accepting the world as we find it, acknowledging the value of each human impulse, and aiming after virtues that depend on self-regulation rather than on total abstinence and mortification. To do this in the midst of our conventionalities and prejudices, our interminglement of unproved expectations and unrefuted terrors, is no doubt hard. Yet if we fail of this, we lose the best the Greeks can teach us.

Goethe.

In the struggle of the adverse forces, felt so strongly ever since the reactionary age of the Renaissance, there is, however, now at least a hope of future reconciliation. A mediator may be confidently expected—even if he has not already appeared in Goethe, who, holding science in his right hand as a lamp, fearlessly explored the world, and lived a Greek life in the nineteenth century. The motto

“Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen  
Resolut zu leben”

is not a strictly Christian sentence. St. Paul had said: “To

Come, let us walk upon the silent sands  
Of Simois, where deep footmarks show long strides;  
Thence we may mount perhaps to higher ground,  
Where Aphrodité from Athené won  
The golden apple, and from Heré too,  
And happy Ares shouted far below.  
Or would ye rather choose the grassy vale,  
Where flows Anapos through anemones,  
Hyacinths, and narcissuses that bend  
To show their rival beauty in the stream?  
Bring with you each her lyre, and each in turn  
Temper a graver with a lighter song.

me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." But it is essentially human. The man who lives by it is restored to that place in the world which he has a right to occupy, instead of regarding himself as an alien and an outcast from imagined heaven, Science must be our redeemer. Science which teaches man to know himself, and explains to him his real relation to nature. Through scientific certainty God and the human conscience shall at last be reconciled, not in the merely paradisaal unity which the Greeks enjoyed, not in the spiritual union of an unrealised future promised by Christianity, but in a natural union. The healthy acceptance of the physical laws to which we are subordinated need not prevent our full consciousness of moral law. It is true that the beautiful Greek life, as of leopards and tiger-lilies and eagles, cannot be restored. Yet neither need we cling to the convent or the prison life of early Catholicity. The new freedom of man must consist of submission to the order of the universe as it exists. The final discovery that there is no antagonism between our physical and spiritual constitution, but rather a most intimate connection, must place the men of the future upon a higher level and a firmer standing-ground than the Greeks. They by experience and demonstration will know what the Greeks felt instinctively. Their precipient sense of what is right will be fortified by the recognition of immutable law. The tact of healthy youth will be succeeded by the calm reason of maturity.

Recognition  
of natural  
law.

## CHAPTER XXV

### CONCLUSION

Sculpture the Greek Art *par excellence*—Plastic Character of the Greek Genius—Stern Aspects of Greek Art—Subordination of Pain and Discord to Harmony—Stoic-Epicurean Acceptance of Life—Sadness of Achilles in the *Odyssey*—Endurance of Odysseus—Myth of Prometheus—Sir H. S. Maine on Progress—The Essential Relation of all Spiritual Movement to Greek Culture—Value of the Moral Attitude of the Greeks for us—Three Points of Greek Ethical Inferiority—The Conception of Nature—The System of Marcus Aurelius—Contrast with the *Imitatio Christi*—The Modern Scientific Spirit—Indestructible Elements in the Philosophy of Nature.

Proposal of  
the sub-  
ject.

I MAY, perhaps, be allowed in this last chapter to quit the impersonal style of the essayist and to refer to some strictures passed upon the earlier series of my *Studies of Greek Poets*. Critics, for whose opinion I feel respect, have observed that, in what I wrote about the genius of Greek Art at the end of that volume, I neglected to notice the sterner and more serious qualities of the Greek spirit, that I exaggerated the importance of sculpture as the characteristic Hellenic art, and that I did not make my meaning clear about the value of the study of Greek modes of thought and feeling for men living in our scientific age. To take up these topics in detail, and to answer some of these indictments, is my purpose in the present chapter. They are so varied that I may fairly be excused for adopting a less methodical and connected development of ideas than ought to be demanded from a man who is not answering objections, but preferring opinions.



To take the least important of these questions first: why is sculpture selected as the most eminent and characteristic art of the Hellenic race, when so much remains of their poetry, and of prose work in the highest sense artistic? To my mind the answer is simple enough. One modern nation has produced a drama which can compete with that of Athens. Another has carried painting to a perfection we have little reason to believe it ever reached in Greece. A third has satisfied the deepest and the widest needs of our emotional nature, by such music as no Greek, in all probability, had any opportunity of hearing. In the last place, Gothic architecture, the common heritage of all the European nations of the modern world, is at least as noble as the architecture of the ancients. The Greeks alone have been unique in sculpture: what survives of Pheidias and Praxiteles, of Polyclethus and Scopas, and of their schools, transcends in beauty and in power, in freedom of handling and in purity of form, the very highest work of Donatello, Della Quercia, and Michael Angelo. We have, therefore, a *prima facie* right to lay great stress on sculpture as a Greek art, just as we have the *prima facie* right to select painting as an Italian art. The first step taken from this position leads to the reflection that, within the sphere of art at any rate, the one art which a nation has developed as its own, to which it has succeeded in giving unique perfection, and upon which it has impressed the mark of its peculiar character, will lend the key for the interpretation of its whole æsthetic temperament. The Italians cannot have been singularly and pre-eminently successful in painting without displaying some of the painter's qualities in all their artistic products. The Greeks cannot have made sculpture unapproachably complete without possessing a genius wherein the sculptor's bend of mind was specially predominant; and thus infusing somewhat of the sculpturesque into the sister arts. Painting for Italy and sculpture for Greece may be fairly taken as the fully-formed and flawless crystals in a

Greek  
sculpture.

National  
genius ex-  
pressed in  
some one  
form of art.

matrix of congenial, but not equally developed, matter. The ideal to which either race aspired instinctively in all its art was realised to the fullest, by the one in sculpture, by the other in painting. So we are justified in testing the whole of their æsthetic products by the laws of painting and of sculpture respectively. This, broadly stated, without economy of phrase or cautious reservation, is the reason why a student who has tried, however imperfectly, to assimilate to himself the spirit displayed in the surviving monuments of Greek art, is brought back at every turn to sculpture as the norm and canon of them all.

Dominance  
of plastic  
qualities in  
all Greek  
products.

Whatever knowledge he may gain about the circumstances of Greek life and the peculiar temper of Greek thought, will only strengthen his conviction. The national games, the religious pageants, the theatrical shows, and the gymnastic exercises of the Greeks were sculpturesque. The conditions of their speculative thought in the first dawn of civilised self-consciousness, when spiritual energy was still conceived as incarnate only in a form of flesh, and the soul was inseparable from the body except by an unfamiliar process of analysis, harmonised with the art which interprets the mind in all its movements by the features and the limbs. Their careful choice of distinct motives in poetry, their appeal in all imaginative work to the inner eye that sees, no less than to the sympathies that thrill, their abstinence from descriptions of landscape and analyses of emotion, their clear and massive character-delineation, point to the same conclusion. Everything tends to confirm the original perception that the simplicity of form, the purity of design, the self-restraint, and the parsimony both of expression and material, imposed by sculpture on the artist, were observed as laws by the Greeks in their mental activity, and more especially in their arts. It is this which differentiates them from the romantic nations. When, therefore, we undertake to speak of the genius of Greek art, we are justified in giving the first place to

sculpture and in assuming that sculpture strikes the keynote of the whole music.

To take a far more serious objection next. It is true that, while gazing intently upon the luminous qualities of the Greek spirit, we are tempted to neglect its sterner and more sombre aspect. Not, indeed, that the shadows are not there, patent to superficial observers, and necessary even to the sublimity of the ideal we admire in its serene beauty ; but they are so consistently subordinated to light and lustre that he who merely seeks to seize predominant characteristics may find it difficult to appreciate them duly without missing what is even more essential. A writer on the arts of the Greeks is not bound to take into consideration the defects of their civil and domestic life, the discords and disturbance of their politics, the pains they felt and suffered in common with humanity at large, the incomplete morality of a race defined by no sharp line but that of culture from barbarians. It is rather his duty to note how carefully these things, which even we discern as discords, were excluded by them from the sphere of beauty ; since it is precisely this that distinguishes the Greeks most decidedly from the modern nations, who have used pain, perplexity, and apparent failure as subjects for the noblest æsthetic handling. The world-pain of our latter years was felt, as a young man may feel it, by the Greeks of the best age ; but their artists did not, like Shakespeare and Michael Angelo, Goethe and Beethoven, make this the substance of their mightiest works. Ancient Hellas contained nothing analogous to Hamlet, or the Tombs of the Medici, to Faust, or the C minor Symphony. The desolation of humanity adrift upon a sea of chance and change finds expression here and there in a threnos of Simonides or an epigram of Callimachus. The tragic poets are never tired of dwelling upon destiny, inherent partly in the transmitted doom of ancestors, and partly in the moral character of individuals. The depth of Pindar's soul is stirred by the question that has tried all ages : "Creatures of a day ! What are we

The darker aspects of Greek thought and feeling.

Harmony  
and light  
predomi-  
nate.

and what are we not?" Such strains, however, are, as it were, occasional and accidental in Greek poetry. The Greek artist, not having a background of Christian hope and expectation against which he could relieve the trials and afflictions of this life, aimed at keeping these things in a strictly subordinate place. He sought to produce a harmony in his work which should correspond to health in the body and to temperance in the soul, to present a picture of human destiny, not darkened by the shadows of the tomb, but luminous beneath the light of day. It was his purpose, as indeed it is of all good craftsmen, not to weaken, but to fortify, not to dispirit and depress, but to exalt and animate. The very imperfect conceptions he had formed of immortality determined the course he pursued. He had no hell to fear, no heaven to hope for. It was in no sense his duty to cast a gloom over the only world he knew by painting it in sombre colours, but rather to assist the freedom of the spirit, and to confirm the energies of men by bringing what is glad and beautiful into prominence. In this way the Greeks, after their own fashion, asserted that unconquerable faith in the goodness of the universe, and in the dignity of the human race, without which progress would be impossible. Though the life of man may be hard and troublous, though diseases and turbulent passions assail his peace, though the history of nations be but a tale that is told, and the days of heroes but a dream between two sleeps, yet the soul is strong to rise above these vapours of the earth into a clearer atmosphere. The real way of achieving a triumph over chance and of defying fate, is to turn to good account all fair and wholesome things beneath the sun, and to maintain for an ideal the beauty, strength, and splendour of the body, mind, and will of man. The mighty may win fame, immortal on the lips of poets and in the marble of the sculptor. The meanest may possess themselves in patience and enjoy. Thus the Greeks adopted for their philosophy of life what Clough described as a "Stoic-Epicurean acceptance" of the world. They practised a genial

accommodation of their natures to the facts which must perforce regulate the existence of humanity. To ascertain the conditions of nature, and to adapt themselves thereto by training, was the object of their most serious schemes of education. Later on, when the bloom began to pass from poetry and art, and the vigour of national life declined, this attitude of simple manliness diverged into hedonism and asceticism. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, said one section of the thinkers. Let us bear all hardness, lest we become the slaves of chance and self, said the other. But neither proposition expressed the full mind of the Greeks of the best age. They clearly saw that, in spite of disaster and disease, life was a good thing for those who maintained the balance of moral and physical health. Without asceticism they strove after well-ordered conduct. Without hedonism they took their frugal share of the delightful things furnished by the boon earth in prodigal abundance. The mental condition of such men, expectant, grateful, and serenely acquiescent, has been well expressed by Goethe in lines like these:—

"That nought belongs to me I know  
 Save thoughts that never cease to flow  
 From founts that cannot perish,  
 And every fleeting shape of bliss  
 That kindly fortune lets me kiss  
 And in my bosom cherish."

It is this mental attitude which I think must be regained by us who seek firm foothold in the far more complicated difficulties of the present age. While it is easy, therefore, to omit the darker shadows from our picture of Greek life, because, although they are there, they are almost swallowed up in brightness, it is not easy to exaggerate the tranquil and manly spirit with which the Greeks faced the evils of the world and rose above them. Owing to this faculty for absorbing all sad things and presenting, through art, only the splendour of accomplished strength and beauty, the Greeks have left for the

Sanity of  
judgment.

Value of  
Greek in-  
fluence for  
us.

world a unique treasure of radiant forms in sculpture, of lustrous thoughts in poetry, of calm wisdom in philosophy and history. Their power upon all arts and sciences is the power of a harmonising and health-giving spirit. This it is which, in spite of their perception of the sterner problems of the world, obliges us to describe their genius as adolescent; for adolescence has of strength, and sorrow, and reflection so much only as is compatible with beauty. This, again, it is which makes their influence so valuable to us now, who need for our refreshing the contact with unused and youthful forces.

The sombre  
background  
to human  
life.

At the same time, while insisting upon the truth of all this, many of the chapters in these two volumes have forced upon our minds what is severe and awful in the genius of the Greeks. The Chthonian deities form a counterpart to the dwellers on Olympus. The voice of the people in the Hesiodic poems rises like the cry of Israel from Pharaoh's brickfields rather than the song-like shout of Salaminian oarsmen. Who, again, in reading the *Iliad*, has not felt that the splendour of Achilles, coruscating like a star new-washed in ocean waves, detaches itself from a background of impenetrable gloom? He blazes in his god-like youth for one moment only above the mists of Styx, the waters of Lethe; and it is due to the triumphant imagination of his poet that the consciousness of impending fate adds lustre to his heroism instead of dooming him to the pathetic pallor of the Scandinavian Balder. When we meet Achilles in Hades, and hear him sigh,

"Rather would I in the sun's warmth divine  
Serve a poor churl who drags his days in grief,  
Than the whole lordship of the dead were mine."

we touch the deepest sorrow of the Greek heart, a sorrow lulled to rest in vain by anodynes of Eleusinian mysteries and Samothracian rites, a sorrow kept manfully in check by resolute wills and burning enthusiasms, but which recurred continually, converting their dream of a future life into a night-

mare of unsubstantial *ennui*. If the story of Achilles involves a dreary insight into the end of merely human activity, that of Odysseus turns immediately upon the troubles of our pilgrimage through life. Exquisitely beautiful as are all the outlines, surface touches, and colours in the *Odyssey*, as of some Mediterranean landscape crowded with delicate human forms, yet beneath the whole there lies an undertone of sombreness. The energy of the hero is inseparable from endurance.

The painful  
side of  
human  
activity.

τέτλαθι δὴ κραδίη· καὶ κίντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης.

"Bear and be brave, my heart: thou hast borne more grisly trials in times past."

That is the exclamation of no light-hearted youngling, but of one who has sounded all the deeps and shallows of the river of experience. And if we have to speak thus of the heroes, what shall we say about the countless common people following their lords to Troy in the cause of a strange woman, those beautiful dead warriors over whom the Æschylean Chorus poured forth the most pathetic of lamentations? To pretend that the Greeks felt not the passion and the pain of human agony and strife, would be a paradox implying idiocy in him who put it forth. Still, it were scarcely less feeble to forget that their strength lay in restraining the expression of this feeling, and in subduing its vehemence. The wounded heroes on the Æginetan pediment are dying with smiles upon their lips; and this may serve as a symbol for the mode of treatment reserved by the Greek artists for what is dark and terrible.

Enough has been already said while dealing with the dramatists about the profound morality and the stern philosophy of the Greek tragic poets. It is not necessary again to traverse that ground. Yet for a moment we may once more remember here what depths of pity and of pathos lie hidden in the legend of Prometheus, whether we think of him as the divine champion of erring men at war with envious deities,

Myths of  
Prometheus  
and  
Herakles.

or as personified humanity struggling against the forces of niggardly nature. Prometheus and Epimetheus and Pandora dramatise a legend of life supremely sad—so sad, indeed, that the calm genius of the Greeks regarded it with half-averted eyes, and chose rather to blur its outlines than to define what it contained, enough of sorrow to unman the stoutest. Poets of a northern race would have brooded over this mythus until it became for them the form of all the anguish and revolt and aspiration of the soul of man. Not so the Greeks. Hesiod leaves the Saga in obscurity. Æschylus employs it to exhibit the spirit unperturbed by menaces of mere brute force, and wisely pliant in the end to unavoidable fate. Subsequent poets and philosophers remember Prometheus together with Orpheus only as the founders of the arts and sciences that make men happy. To eliminate the mysterious and the terrible, to accentuate the joyous and the profitable for humane uses, was the truest instinct of the Greeks. Even the tale of Herakles, who chose the hard paths of life, and ascended at last only through flames to clasp Hebe, eternal youth, upon Olympus, “with joy and bliss in over-measure for ever,” in spite of its severe lesson of morality, is a poem of beautiful human heroism from which the discordant elements are purged away.

Stoic-  
Epicurean  
acceptance.

To recover, if that be possible, this “Stoic-Epicurean acceptance,” and to face the problems of the world in which we live, with Greek serenity, concerns us at the present time. Having said thus much, I am brought to touch upon the third topic mentioned at the outset of this chapter. Owing to insufficient exposition, I did not in my first series of *Studies of Greek Poets* make it clear in what way I thought the Greeks could teach those of us for whom the growth of rationalism and the discoveries of science have tended to remove old landmarks. What we have to win for ourselves is a theory of conduct which shall be human, and which shall be based upon our knowledge of nature. Greek morality was distinguished



by precisely these two qualities. In its best forms, moreover, it was not antagonistic to the essence of Christianity, but thoroughly in accord with that which is indestructible in Christian teaching. It therefore contained that vital element we now require.

A remarkable passage in Sir H. S. Maine's Rede Lecture for 1875 will force itself upon the attention of all who believe that there are still lessons to be learned from the Greeks by men of the nineteenth century. "Whatever may be the nature and value of that bundle of influences which we call Progress," he writes, "nothing can be more certain than that, when a society is once touched by it, it spreads like a contagion. Yet, so far as our knowledge extends, there was only one society in which it was endemic; and putting that aside, no race or nationality, left entirely to itself, appears to have developed any very great intellectual result, except, perhaps, Poetry. Not one of those intellectual excellencies which we regard as characteristic of the great progressive races of the world—not the law of the Romans, not the philosophy and sagacity of the Germans, not the luminous order of the French, not the political aptitude of the English, not that insight into physical nature to which all races have contributed—would apparently have come into existence if those races had been left to themselves. To one small people, covering in its original seat no more than a hand's-breadth of territory, it was given to create the principle of Progress, of movement onwards and not backwards or downwards, of destruction tending to construction. That people was the Greek. Except the blind forces of Nature, nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin. A ferment spreading from that source has vitalised all the great progressive races of mankind, penetrating from one to another, and producing results accordant with its hidden and latent genius, and results of course often far greater than any exhibited in Greece itself."

Sir H. S.  
Maine on  
Progress and  
Greek in-  
fluences.

It may be difficult to form an accurate notion of what the

Points of  
contact with  
Hellas in  
our history.

eloquent lecturer meant by Progress : it may be easy to object that the secret of progressive growth in politics at least was not possessed by the Greeks themselves, and that Christianity, which has certainly moved far more efficiently than any other spiritual force whatever in this world, was as certainly neither one of the blind forces of Nature, nor yet Hellenic in its origin. Still, there is a truth in this passage which remains unimpaired. It expresses largely, and without due reservation, perhaps, what the students of the Greeks in relation to the universal history of civilisation must feel to be a sweeping truth. The advance of the human intellect is measured by successive points of contact with the Greek spirit—in Rome before the birth of Christ, in Islam during the exhaustion of the Roman Empire, in the schools of Paris and Seville during the Middle Ages, when Averrhoes and Aristotle kept alive the lamp of science, in Italy at the period of the Renaissance, when Greek philosophy and poetry and art restored life to the senses, confidence to the reason, and freedom to the soul of man. All civilised nations, in all that concerns the activity of the intellect, are colonies of Hellas. The flame that lives within our Prytaneia was first kindled on Athene's hearth in Attica ; and should it burn dim or be extinguished, we must needs travel back to the sacred home of the virgin goddess for fresh fire. This we are continually doing. It is this which has made Greek indispensable in modern education. And at the present moment we may return with profit to the moralists of Greece.

Christianity. At this point I feel that my former critics will exclaim against me : "This is the very same offence repeated—ignoring the moral inferiority of the Greeks, he holds them up as an example to nations improved by Christianity." I reply that I am far from forgetting the substantial advance made by the world in morality during the last eighteen centuries. The divine life and the precepts of Christ are as luminous as ever ; and I, for one, have no desire to replant pseudo-paganism on

the modern soil. I know full well that, in addition to its being undesirable, this is utterly impossible. I know, moreover, that new virtues, unrecognised by the Greeks, have been revealed to the world by Christianity, and that a new cogency and new sanctions have been given by it to that portion of ethics which it had in common with Greek philosophy. It is not the morality, but the moral attitude, of the Greeks that seems to my mind worthy of our imitation. In order to make this distinction clear, and to save myself, if that may be, from seeming to advocate a retrograde movement, through sentimental sympathy with impossible anachronisms, or through blind hostility to all that makes our modern life most beautiful, I must be permitted to embark upon a somewhat lengthy exposition of my meaning. With no desire to be aggressive or polemical, I want to show what, in my judgment, even Christians have still to learn from Greeks.

The morality of the Greeks was inferior to that of modern races in several points connected with slavery and the social position of women. An apologist might, indeed, argue that slavery, as recognised by the Athenians, was superior to many forms of the same evil till lately tolerated by the Christian nations. Mediæval villeinage and Russian serfdom, the Spanish enslavement of Peruvians and Mexicans, and the American slave-trade flourished in spite of the theoretical opposition of Christianity, and have only succumbed to the advance of rational humanity. The same advocate could show, as Mr. Mahaffy has already done, that in Greece there existed a high ideal of womanhood. All students of history will, however, admit that in relation to the three important points above mentioned, the Greeks were comparatively barbarous. At the same time it cannot be contended that these defects were the necessary and immediate outcome of the Hellenic philosophy of life. It is rather proper to regard them as crudities and immaturities belonging to an early period of civilisation. During the last two thousand years the world has advanced in growth,

Moral points  
of inferiority  
in Hellas.

Eclecticism  
of Greek and  
Christian  
ethics.

and its moral improvement has been due to Christian influences. Still, the higher standing-ground we have attained, our matured and purified humanity, all that elevates us ethically above the Jews and Greeks, can be ascribed to Christianity without the implication that it is inextricably bound up with Christian theology, or that it could not survive the dissolution of the orthodox fabric. The question before us at the present moment is, Whether, admitting the comparatively rude ethics of the ancient Greeks, and fully recognising the moral amelioration effected for the human race by Christianity, we, without ceasing to be Christians in all essential points of conduct, may not profitably borrow from the Greeks the spirit which enabled them to live and do their duty in a world whose laws are yet but imperfectly ascertained? Was there not something permanently valuable in their view of the ethical problem which historical Christianity, especially in its more ascetic phases, tends to overlook, but which approves itself to the reason of men who have been influenced by the rapidly advancing mutations of religious thought during the last three centuries? The real point to ascertain, with regard to ourselves and to them, is the basis upon which the conceptions of morality in either period have rested. Modern morality has hitherto been theological: it has implied the will of a divine governor. Greek morality was radically scientific: the faith on which it eventually leaned was a belief in φύσις, in the order of the universe, wherein gods, human societies, and individual human beings had their proper places. The conception of morality as the law for man, regarded as a social being forming part and parcel of the cosmos, was implicit in the whole Greek view of life. It received poetical expression from the tragedians; it transpired in the conversations of Socrates, in the speculations of Plato, and in the more organised system of Aristotle. Ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν (to live according to nature) could be written for a motto on the title-page of a collected corpus of Greek moralists. It may be objected that "to live according to nature" is a vague command,

and also that it is easier said than done ; or, again, that the conception of nature does not essentially differ from that of God who made nature.<sup>1</sup> All that is true ; but the ethics whereof that maxim is the sum have this advantage, that they do not place between us and the world in which we have to live and die the will of a hypothetical ruler, to whom we may ascribe our passions and our fancies, enslaving ourselves to the delusions of our own soul. Nor, again, do they involve the monstrous paradox of all ascetic systems, which assert that human nature is radically evil, and that only that is good in us which contradicts our natural appetites and instincts. Evil and sin are recognised, just as fevers and serpents are recognised ; but while the latter are not referred to a vindictive Creator, so the former are not ascribed to the wilful wickedness of his creatures. In so far as we gain any knowledge of nature, that knowledge is something solid : the whole bearing of a man who feels that his highest duty consists in conforming himself to laws he may gradually but surely ascertain, is certainly different from that of one who obeys the formulæ invented by dead or living priests and prophets to describe the nature of a God whom no man has either seen or heard. It makes no difference that the highest religious systems are concordant with the best-established principles of natural science, that the Mosaic ordinances, for example, are excellently calculated to maintain the physical health and to secure the propagation of a tribe. That the perceptive instincts of the great Nomothetæ should be verified is both intelligible and, *à priori*, highly probable. The superiority of

To live according to nature.

<sup>1</sup> I have tried, lower down, to explain in what way the Greeks interpreted the precept, "Live according to nature." It did not make them, nor assuredly ought it make us, neglect the social virtues or encourage the sensual and selfish instincts at the expense of what is spiritual and altruistic in humanity. Man, as a social being, is part of nature. His happiness, the more we understand his true being, will be found to depend on all that is honourable, comely, temperate, regardful of the interests and rights of his associates.

scientific over theological morality consists meanwhile in its indestructibility.

*The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius.*

The ethics of man, regarded as a member of the universe and answerable only to its order for his conduct, though they underlay the whole thought of the Greeks on moral subjects, did not receive their final exposition till the age of the Roman Stoics. The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius have, therefore, a peculiar retrospective value, owing to the light they cast upon the ethical perception of the Greek race, while at the same time they illustrate that which is unalterable and indestructible in the spirit of Greek morality. What Marcus Aurelius enunciated as an intuition, is what must daily become more binding upon us in proportion as we advance in scientific knowledge. It will not, therefore, be out of place to sketch the main points of his system in a separate paragraph, keeping always in mind that this system was the final outgrowth of Greek speculation after prolonged contact with the Romans. Marcus Aurelius forces to the very utmost a view of human life and duty which could have been but unconsciously implicit in the minds of men of the Periclean age. Yet this view was but the theory logically abstracted from the conduct and the perceptions of a race which started with refined nature-worship, which recognised the duty to the State as paramount, and which put to philosophy the question, What is the End of man?

Nature in the stoical system.

The central notion of Marcus Aurelius is Nature. He regards the universe as a ζῶον, or living creature, animated by a principle of life to which he sometimes gives the title of θεός, or the deity. It is a body with a λόγος, or reason, attaining to consciousness in human beings. Every man participates in the κοινὸς λόγος, or common reason of the cosmos, a portion of whose wisdom forms his intellect. In other words, our consciousness reflects the order of the universe, and enables us to become more than automatically partakers in its movement. To obey this reason is the end of all philosophy, the fulfilment of the purpose for which man exists. By doing

so we are in harmony with the world, and take our proper place in the scale of beings. Nothing can happen to us independent of this order; and therefore nothing, rightly understood, can happen to our hurt. If disease and affliction fall upon us, we must remember that we are the limbs and organs of the whole, and that our suffering is necessary for its well-being. We are thus the citizens of a vast State, members of the universal economy. What affects the whole for good is good for us, and even when it seems to be evil, we must hold fast to the faith that it is good beyond our ken. Our selfishness is swallowed up in the complete and total interest. Our virtues are social and not personal. Our happiness is relative to the general welfare, not contained in any private pleasure or indulgence of an individual caprice.

The motto of this large philosophy is Goethe's often-quoted distich :—

“ Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen  
Resolut zu leben.”

Comparison  
with the  
*Imitatio*  
*Christi*.

If we seek a motto for the *Imitatio Christi*, which may be accepted here as the Christian encheiridion, we find it in the text: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” The author of that manual of conduct regarded the universe not as a coherent whole, good and sound in all its parts, to live in harmony with the laws whereof is the duty of man, but as a machine created out of nothing by the will of God, made fair at first, but changed to foul by sin, wherein men live an evil life, to escape from which brings happiness, to confound the existing laws of which is virtue, and a remedy against the anarchy and tyranny of which can only be found in the cross and death of Christ. To the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, man was not merely a citizen of the dear city of God, but a member, not merely a μέρος (or part), but a μέλος (or limb) of the divine life of the universe. To the Christianity of the *Imitatio*, man was an exile from his home, a wanderer and out of place. It is not my present purpose

Fusion of  
Stoicism and  
Christianity.

to push to their ultimate and logical conclusions the divergences between the Stoicism of the *Meditations* and the Christianity of the *Imitatio*, but rather to recall attention to the philosophy developed by Marcus Aurelius from his conception of man's place in nature, and to show that the ethics resulting from it are specially adapted to an age in which the scientific habit of mind is the strongest. When the whole mass of new knowledge we are continually accumulating forces upon our consciousness the conviction that humanity is a part of the universal whole, it is impossible to cling to dogmas that start from the assumption of original sin and creation vitiated at the very moment of its commencement. So much of the Christian programme, whatever else is left as indestructible, must be abandoned. Nature, with all its imperfections in the physical and moral orders, both of them to be as far as can be conquered and eradicated, must be accepted as it is, as that which was intended so to be. Nor need we adopt the obsolete tactics of the French Deists, or depreciate the essence of Christianity because a great part of its mythology and metaphysic seems untenable. On the contrary, we may reasonably hold that the most perfect man would live the life of Christ in obedience to the maxims of the Roman Emperor, and that Christianity provides us with precisely what was wanting in the Aurelian system. Faith, love, purity, obedience, subordination of self, benevolence—all these are Christian virtues, raised to the height of passionate enthusiasm by their exemplification in the life of Christ. Stoicism stood in need of a criterion. What is reason? what is the true character of truth and goodness? Christianity appears with a criterion which approves itself to our intuitive apprehension. The life of Christ is the perfect life. Learn that, and follow that, and you will reach the height of human nature. To live in harmony with the universe is to live as Christ lived. It is the wrong done in the name of Christ, the figments falsely stamped with Christ's superscription, the follies of Bibliolatry



and dogmatic orthodoxy, that must be abjured ; and I maintain that in our present mood the best hope of not casting away the wheat together with the chaff, of retaining what is fit for human use in Christianity, consists in first assuming the scientific standpoint of Aurelius.

From this digression on the Aurelian system, regarded as the final word of Græco-Roman morality, I pass to a consideration of those urgent needs of modern thought which have to be met in the spirit and with the courage of Mark Antonine. Not his theism, nor his metaphysic, nor his detailed maxims for conduct, but his attitude and temper have to be adopted. And here it must be said once more, by way of preface, that however human progress is ruled by thesis and antithesis, by antagonism and repulsion in its several moments, still nothing can be lost that has been clearly gained. Each synthesis, though itself destined to apparent contradiction, combines the indestructible, the natural and truly human, elements of the momenta which preceded it, excluding only that in them which was the accident of time and place and circumstance. Thus the Greek conception of life was posed ; the Christian conception was counterposed ; the synthesis, crudely attempted in the age of the Renaissance, awaits mature accomplishment in the immediate future. The very ground-thought of science is to treat man as part of the natural order—not, assuredly, on that account excluding from its calculation the most eminent portion of man, his reason and his moral being—and to return from the study of nature with profit to the study of man. It does not annihilate or neutralise what man has gained from Christianity ; on the contrary, the new points of morality developed by the Christian discipline are of necessity accepted as data by the scientific mind. Our object is to combine both the Hellenic and the Christian conceptions in a third, which shall be more solid and more rational than any previous manifestation of either, superior to the Hellenic as it is no longer a mere intuition, superior

Scientific  
conception  
of human  
life.

to the ecclesiastical inasmuch as it relies on no mythology, but seeks to ascertain the law.

Theology  
and meta-  
physic.

The positive knowledge about the world possessed at any period by the human race, cannot fail to modify both theology and metaphysic. Theology, while philosophising the immediate data of faith, professes to embrace and account for all known facts in a comprehensive system, which includes the hypotheses of revelation; while popular religion rests upon opinions and figurative conceptions formed concerning the First Cause of the phenomena observed around us and within us. The systems of theology and the opinions of popular religion must, therefore, from time to time in the world's history, vary according as more or less is actually known, and according as the mind has greater or lesser power of analysing and co-ordinating its stores of knowledge. Metaphysic is the critical examination and construction into a connected scheme of the results obtained by experience—mental, moral, and physical—subjected to reflection, and regarded in their most abstract form as thoughts. It follows of necessity that any revolution in the method of observation and analysis, like that which has been going on during the last three centuries, whereby our conception of the world as a whole is altered, must supply metaphysic with new subject-matter and new methods, and force it to the reconsideration of important problems. Meanwhile, the faculty of thought itself undergoes no essential transformation; our mental and moral nature remains substantially the same. What has always happened, and what alone can happen, is that fresh pabulum is offered to the thinking being, which has to be assimilated to its organism and digested for its nourishment. Consequently we cannot expect to have a sudden and illuminating revolution in psychology and ethics. But, while we learn fresh facts about the universe, our notions concerning the nature of the First Cause and the relation of man to his environments, whether expressed in systems by theology and philosophy, or in opinions by popular religion,

must of necessity be exposed to alteration. To adjust ourselves to this change without sacrificing what is vitally important in religion as the basis of morality is our difficulty.

Physical science, to begin with, has destroyed that old conception of the universe which made this globe central, and of paramount importance. The discoveries of Kepler, Galileo, Newton, first led to a right theory of the planetary movements. The chemists of the last hundred years have substituted an accurate analysis of primitive substances for rough guesses at the four elements. The establishment of the law of the conservation of force has demonstrated the unity of all cosmical operations from the most gigantic to the most minute. Geology, together with the speculations of comparative anatomists and naturalists, has altered all our notions with regard to the age of the world, and to the antecedents and early history of the human race. The results gathered during the last three centuries in these and other fields of investigation render it certain that mankind has occupied but a brief moment in the long life of our globe, and tend to prove that our duration here will, at an enormously, but not incalculably, distant period, be rendered impossible by the action of those very forces which called us into being. The years of humanity are therefore "a scape in oblivion." Man, for whom, according to the author of Genesis, the sun and moon and stars were made, is shown to be among the less important products of the cosmical system. We are no permanent owners, but the brief tenants of our tiny globe. Nor need this terrify or startle us. Each man expects the certainty of his own dissolution. The race must learn that it also is ephemeral. For this our religions have already prepared us. But what is new in the prospect revealed by science is that, not by a sudden tempest of vindictive fire from heaven, but in the tranquil course of the long life of nature, such euthanasia is prepared for men. As the universe subsisted countless æons before our birth, so will it survive our loss, and scarcely keep a trace of our existence.

The ground-  
work of  
humanity  
remains un-  
altered.

At the same time the spiritual conditions of humanity remain unaltered. Men we are; men we must be: to find out what is truly human, essential to the highest type and utmost happiness of man, is still our most absorbing interest. Nor need we abandon that noblest of all formulas: "To fear God and to keep His commands is the whole duty of man;" provided we are careful to accept the word God as the name of a hitherto unapprehended energy, the symbol of that which is the life and thought and motion of the universe whereof we are a part, the ideal toward which we are for ever struggling on the toilsome path of spiritual evolution, the unknown within us and without us which is the one vital irremovable reality. Science, which consists in the determination of laws,<sup>1</sup> compels us to believe that, as in the physical world invariable sequences are observed, so also in the moral nature of man must comprehensive rules and explanations of phenomena be observable. It is but the refusal to apply to moral problems the scientific method with unflinching logic which leads certain otherwise positive thinkers to recognise "the freedom of human volition" as an incalculable element, and thus to withdraw human conduct from the sphere of exact investigation. To know God in the physical order is to know what has been, and what is, and what will be in the economy of primæval forces. To know God in the moral order is to know what has been, and what is, and what will be within the region of the human consciousness. To obey God in the physical order is to control those forces for our own use as far as our constitution will permit; for thus we energeise in harmony with the universe. To obey God in the moral order is to act in accordance with those hitherto discovered laws which have carried the race onward from barbarism to self-knowledge and self-control, and with all our might and main to strive for further precision in their deter-

<sup>1</sup> "General conceptions in which a series of similarly recurring natural processes may be embraced."—HELMHOLTZ.

mination. But even here is the debatable ground ; here is the point at issue ; here confessedly is the region that has never yet been subjected to science.

The analogy of scientific discovery forces us to look no longer for the actual fiats of a divine voice on Sinai, but to expect that by interrogating humanity itself we shall ultimately demonstrate those unchangeable decrees by conforming to which our race may pass from strength to strength. We must cease to be clairvoyants and become analysts, verifying our intuitions by positive investigation. For the old term Commandment, which implies the will of a sovereign, our present condition of knowledge leads us to substitute the new term Law as defined above.<sup>1</sup> This, although the subject-matter and even the practical result remain unchanged, is no slight alteration. It implies a new notion, both popular and scientific, of the divine in nature, a new criterion of what is right and wrong, and in the last resort a new metaphysic.

Discoverable laws supersede divine fiats and commandments.

But with a view to this end we have to introduce a more stringent and painstaking method into ethics. We must be content to abandon dogmatism upon insoluble questions, however fascinating and imperious ; we must above all things quit delusions, however sanctioned by ancient reverence. And here both faith and courage are needed. To believe that the moral laws are within us, requiring to be disentangled, without the aid of an authentic revelation, from the mass of phenomena, in the same way as physical laws have been abstracted from facts by scientific reasoning, demands a virile and firm confidence in the order of the universe and in the intellectual faculty of man.

New method of ethics.

Hitherto in ethics we have proceeded on the *à priori* road ; we have assumed certain hypotheses, or supposed fixed starting-points, concerning the origin and the destiny of mankind, about both of which things we know absolutely nothing

The *à priori* path of inquiry.

<sup>1</sup> P. 408, note.

Analysis and  
study of  
acts.

for sure. Starting with a theological system, which accounted for the creation of man and the nature of evil in close connection with a definite but delusive cosmogony, taking a future state of happiness or misery for granted, we have brought our dreams to bear upon the springs of conduct. It is precisely at this point that science, partly by the revolution effected in cosmical theory, partly by the exhibition of the true method of analysis, helps to free us from what is fanciful, and to indicate the right way for the future. It has proved in one realm of knowledge that an advance toward truth must not be expected from systems professing to set forth the causes of phenomena, but from a gradual and patient exploration of the phenomena themselves. Not matter, but the qualities of what we call matter as subject to our senses, are the object of physical science. Not God, but human conduct, must be the object of moral science, albeit the ideal that guides human conduct will continue to be worshipped as our God. Nor will it here avail to demur that the human will is essentially free, and therefore not subject to law in the strictly scientific sense. Each step we make in the investigation of heredity, and all the other conditions to which man is subject, forces us more and more plainly to the conclusion that the very seat of our supposed liberty, our desires and personal peculiarities, distinctive tastes and special predilections, are determined for us by circumstances beyond our own control. The force of these circumstances separately and in combination could be estimated if we possessed but the complete data for forming such a calculation; nor does this certainty destroy the fact that each new personality introduces a new element into the sequence. It narrows the field wherein volition can move, but leaves the soul still capable of being shaped. What is really incalculable is not the sphere of action for the individual, but the source of energy in the universe, in vital connection with which we live both physically and mentally. We are what we are, each of us, by no freak of chance, by no

act of arbitrary spontaneity ; and our prayers must take the form dictated by Cleanthes :—

“Lead Thou me, God, Law, Reason, Motion, Life !  
 All names alike for Thee are vain and hollow.  
 Lead me ; for I will follow without strife ;  
 Or if I strive, still must I blindly follow.”

For many centuries physical science itself suffered from the dead weight of abstract notions accepted as data, and was inert for want of a true method. Its recent successes are an index to the advance which moral science might make if it could adopt the right way of investigation, comparison, and reflective reasoning. At the same time it must be confessed that for moral science this method has not as yet been made either easy of application or fruitful of results. Our subject-matter is so complex, and so apparently distinct from sensible existence, as to seem intangible. Both thought and language are the heritage of countless generations, wherein a medley of guesses and confused conceptions are stored. Of general laws in ethics we have as yet but instinctive, and as it were æsthetic, perceptions, fortified and enforced by theological beliefs, or converted into intellectual notions by philosophy. Still, this need not disturb us, when we reflect how long it was before the true method of scientific discovery in the analysis of matter was brought to light, and what a continuous progress from one determination to another followed upon the single law established in explanation of terrestrial gravity. The scientific solution of one ethical problem, whether that be ultimately effected through physiology by the establishment of correspondences between the physical and moral functions of humanity, or through comparative history and the study of evolution, may prove as fruitful for ethics as the discovery of Galileo was for physics. It is impossible to utter dogmatic predictions at this point of our knowledge. Yet we may indulge in hopes that are of the nature of dreams. Can we

Emergence  
 from the  
 stage of  
 theological  
 conception.

not in this way venture to anticipate that the men of the future may obtain demonstrated certainty with regard to Man considered as an integral portion of the universe—that they may understand the conditions of his conduct as clearly as we now apprehend the behaviour of certain gases—and that their problem will be, not how to check healthy normal appetites, but how to multiply and fortify faculties? Can we not dream that morality will be one branch of the study of the world as a whole, a department of τὰ φυσικά (or natural science), when φύσις (or nature), regarded as a total unity, that suffers no crude radical distinction of mind and body, has absorbed our scientific attention?

the bugbear  
material-  
ism.

We need not fear that either the new notion of Deity forced upon us by the extension of our knowledge, even should this destroy the last vestige of anthropomorphism, or the involved application of a positive method to ethics, will lead to what is dreaded as materialism. If materialism be not a mere name, it is feared because it is thought to imply egotism, immersion in sensuality, and indifference to ideas. But what is the prospect unrolled before us by science?<sup>1</sup> What is, in effect, the new intellectual atmosphere to which we must acclimatise our moral and religious sensibilities? Surely the most sublime, the most ideally imaginative, which it has ever been given to man to contemplate. The spectacle of the infinitely great and the infinitely small, alike of the mental and the physical, the natural and the supersensible, subordinated to unchangeable laws, and permeated by one single energy, revealed to us by science, contains nothing that need drive us to a stolid atheism, but rather such considerations as give the value of positive certainty to Christ's words about the sparrow.

<sup>1</sup> By science here and elsewhere, when used without a qualifying epithet, I mean to include what is also known as philosophy. In science, thus understood, thought embraces the whole field of knowledge in a survey that has less in common with the metaphysics of the schoolmen than with the analytic method of the natural sciences.



We *know* now that the whole past history of the universe is involved in the blood-beats of the smallest animalcule discernible by the microscope, that the farthest fixed star to which our telescopes have any access obeys the laws that determine the action of our muscles, that our thought holds in solution the experience of all preceding ages. If the religion of the future is to be founded on scientific bases of this nature, there is surely here less room for the extravagance of egoism and sensuality than there was in the Catholic system, from which emerged a Sixtus IV. and an Alexander VI. What St. Paul conceived but dimly, the physicist declares to us: we are all parts and members of the divine whole. It is the business of science not to make God nowhere in the universe, but everywhere, and to prove, what previous moralists have guessed, that the happiness and the freedom of man consists in his self-subordination to the laws of the world, whereof he is an essential, though an insignificant part. Against the decrees of God conceived as a sovereign subject to like fluctuations of emotion with ourselves, it was possible to offend again and again without losing the hope that at some facile moment, some *mollia tempora fandi*, He might be propitiated. The laws of the world are inexorable; they alone enforce with absolute equity the maxim τῷ δράσαντι παθεῖν (the man who did the deed must suffer.)

Stringent  
code of  
scientific  
laws.

Instead of materialism it might be more reasonable, perhaps, to dread fatalism; but fatalism is a rock on which all systems, philosophical and religious, when carried to abstract conclusions, have tended to drift. Science cannot be more fatalistic than Calvinism; yet the instinctive belief in the liberty of the individual has survived all logic, and is likely still to do so till such time as the prevailing intuition shall be positively proved. And even were the conviction that we are not free agents in the old sense of the phrase to be forced upon us, the sting of fatalism would be extracted together with the belief in an omnipotent personality, framing

The bugbear  
of fatalism.

men of set purpose for honour and dishonour. It was the clash of the human and the divine wills, both equally finite, though the latter was isolated by abstraction and ticketed with the epithet of infinity—in other words, the fiction of a despot ruling over slaves—that gave its terror to necessity.

Unity of the  
universe.

Before the latest discoveries of physical science, as before the highest philosophical analysis, the cruder distinctions of soul and body, spirit and matter, tend to disappear. The nature of the universe is proved too subtle for this dichotomy. Only a coarse intelligence will, therefore, run to the conclusion that so-called matter, with its supposed finality, is absolute ; or that so-called thought, with its supposed infinity, is universal. The finer intelligence, convinced of the correlation between these apparently antagonistic moments, must pause to contemplate the everlasting sequences of time past extended into time to come, and in the end must feel persuaded of its own indissoluble connection with that, whatever it may be, which is permanent in the universe. The moment Now is a potential eternity. That we are, is a sufficient proof that we have been, and that we shall be. Each act, as it has had immeasurable and necessary antecedents, will be fruitful of immeasurable and necessary consequents ; for the web of the world is ever weaving, and to drop a thread in it is utterly impossible. That we are such or such is, again, the proof that our qualities have in them something significant, both for that which has been, and for that which will be for everlasting. We have been, we are, we shall be, a part of the eternal complex. Not therefore are we at liberty to assume definite propositions concerning what is called the immortality of the soul. To do so in the present state of knowledge would be as much a begging of the question as to dogmatise upon the so-called personality of God. Suspension of judgment is as imperatively required of us by science as faith in the unintelligible was demanded by the Catholic Church. As then trial of the faith wrought patience, so now wise abstinence from dogmatism is the attitude of faith.

Following this course of thought into particulars, we have no reason to apprehend that personal licence should result from a system of purely positive ethics based upon that conception of our relation to the universe which science is revealing. On the contrary, we may expect from the establishment of such a system a code of conduct more stringent in all that can concern the well-being of the individual than any that has yet been conceived. In the future, sensual excess will surely be reckoned a form of madness, and what we now dignify by the name of vice will be relegated, shorn of Satanic lustre, to the lazer-house. Nor need we fear that purely mental problems should lose their value or become less interesting. No amount of demonstration that the mind is dependent on the brain can so confuse the reason of a lucid thinker as to make him conclude that therefore there is no mind. Reduce all our emotions, our habits, our thoughts, to modes of cell-existence—prove that thinking and feeling are functions of nerve-centres—the mystery has only shifted its centre of gravity: we are still ourselves for better or for worse; thought and feeling are still the essential part of us; man remains, in spite of all, the only known being to whom the command *γνῶθι σεαυτὸν* (know thyself) has been given, together with the faculty of obeying this command. Physical science does not exclude her elder sisters philosophy and religion, though she may compel religion to abandon mythology, and supply philosophy with new worlds for analysis. What she does is to substitute solid, if slowly-discovered, knowledge for guesses, and a patient but progressive method for the systems which ontologist after ontologist has built and pulled to pieces. Will not the men of the future look back with wonder on the ages in which religion, philosophy, and the science of nature were supposed to be at war, instead of being, as they will be then, one system?

Prospects  
for the  
future.

## APPENDIX

### SAPPHO'S HYMN TO APHRODITE

See Vol. i., Chapter on the Lyrists

"GLITTERING-THRONED, undying Aphrodite,  
Wile-weaving daughter of high Zeus, I pray thee,  
Tame not my soul with heavy woe, dread mistress,  
Nay, nor with anguish !  
But hither come, if even erst of old time  
Thou didst incline, and listenedst to my crying,  
And from thy father's palace down descending,  
Camest with golden  
Chariot yoked : thee fair swift-flying sparrows  
Over dark earth with multitudinous fluttering,  
Pinion on pinion, thorough middle ether  
Down from heaven hurried.  
Quickly they came like light, and thou, blest lady,  
Smiling with clear undying eyes didst ask me  
What was the woe that troubled me, and wherefore  
I had cried to thee :  
What thing I longed for to appease my frantic  
Soul ; and whom now must I persuade, thou askedst,  
Whom must entangle to thy love, and who now,  
Sappho, hath wronged thee ?  
Yea, for if now he shun, he soon shall chase thee ;  
Yea, if he take not gifts, he soon shall give them ;  
Yea, if he love not, soon shall he begin to  
Love thee, unwilling.  
Come to me now too, and from tyrannous sorrow  
Free me, and all things that my soul desires to  
Have done, do for me, queen, and let thyself too  
Be my great ally !"

## DESDEMONA'S DEATH

IN the first edition of this book I had printed the words in the text, p. 138, thus: *dying by her husband's knife*. I have now altered the phrase because the manner of Desdemona's death is uncertain. Othello intended to put an end to her by smothering; and he had certainly begun to execute this purpose with the pillow, when her struggles proved too terrible, and at the same time a knocking was heard at the door. He then exclaimed:—

“I that am cruel am yet merciful;  
I would not have thee linger in thy pain:—  
So, so!”

At this point there is no new stage-direction to indicate that he used any other means to kill her but suffocation. Yet the fact that she afterwards regained sufficient breath to cry out,

“O falsely, falsely murdered!”

seems to show that, if Shakespeare vividly conceived her death-scene, he meant Othello at the words *So, so!* to draw the dagger, with which he afterwards stabs himself, and to plunge it into Desdemona's breast; since it is impossible that a woman, not otherwise injured, should so far recover from being stifled as to speak several lines articulately, and then die without further violence. The editors of the Variorum Shakespeare (1803, vol. xix. p. 500) call attention to this point, and quote the *Sic, sic* of Virgil's *Dido*: and it may be added that Retzsch, in the *Illustrations of Shakespeare*, represents Othello as stabbing Desdemona at the moment when the knocking is heard at the door. It is probable that he had seen it thus upon the stage: for it was the custom till lately so to play the last act of *Othello*. Against the theory here advanced, it may be urged that Othello's settled intention was to stifle, not to stab; that his exclamation after the murder, Act V, Scene 2, line 205, accords with stifling better than stabbing; and finally, that the impossibility of Desdemona's recovering her voice after stifling is no argument, seeing that to expect accuracy in such details, even from a poet so vivid in imagination as Shakespeare, is uncritical. I have thought the subject of sufficient interest to justify this lengthy and somewhat irrelevant note.

## THEOCRITUS: IDYLL XXIX

See Chapter on the Idyllists.

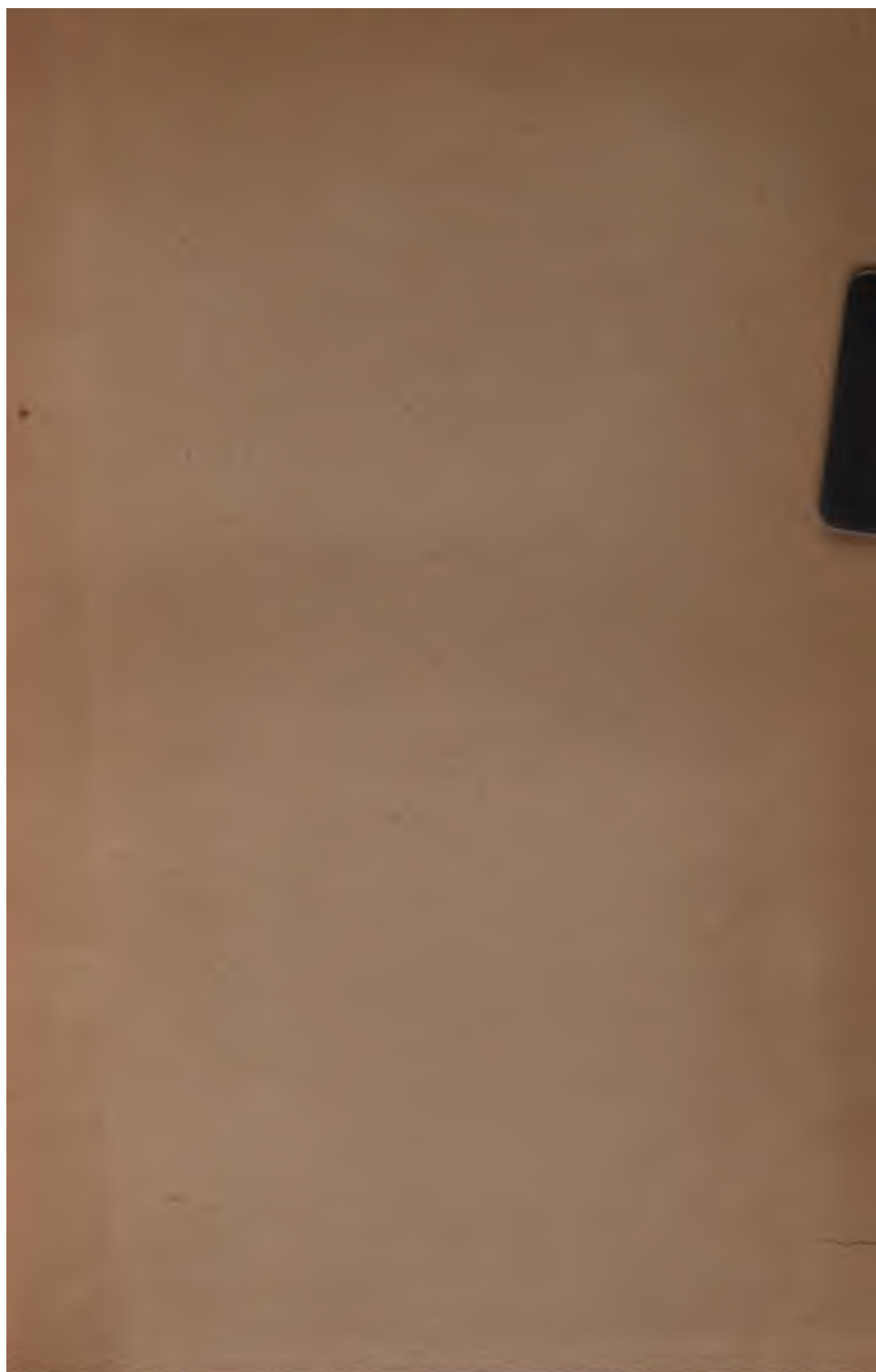
"WINE, my boy, and truth—so runs the proverb :  
Therefore in our cups we must be truthful ;  
And what lies within my soul, I'll tell you.  
Not with all your little heart you love me ;  
Well I know, for half my life is hidden  
In the thought of you, the rest is ruined.  
When you smile, the days are bright above me  
Like a god's ; you frown, and all is darkness.  
Is it right your lover thus to torture ?  
Listen to my words, for I am older ;  
Heed, and you shall profit much, and praise me.  
Make one nest upon one sheltering tree-top,  
Where no savage beast may come and harm you :  
Now upon this bough to-day you settle,  
And next day on that, for ever flitting ;  
Let but some one see and praise your beauty,  
Straight you treat him to a three years' friendship,  
And your old love is a friend of three days.  
Yea, your haughtiness is more than human !  
But I bid you seek the same man always ;  
For if thus you live, you shall be revered  
In the city ; yea, and Love shall bless you,  
Love who tames the heart of whom it likes him,  
Love who turned my steely soul to softness.  
By this little mouth I kiss, I warn you  
'Twas but yesterday you were a baby ;  
And old age o'ertakes us in a twinkling,  
Wrinkled age : yet no man may recapture  
Youth, for youth hath wings upon his shoulder,  
And our feet are slow to catch the flying.  
This I bid you mind, and be more gentle,  
And your lover recompense with loving ;  
That, when manhood shades your cheek, together

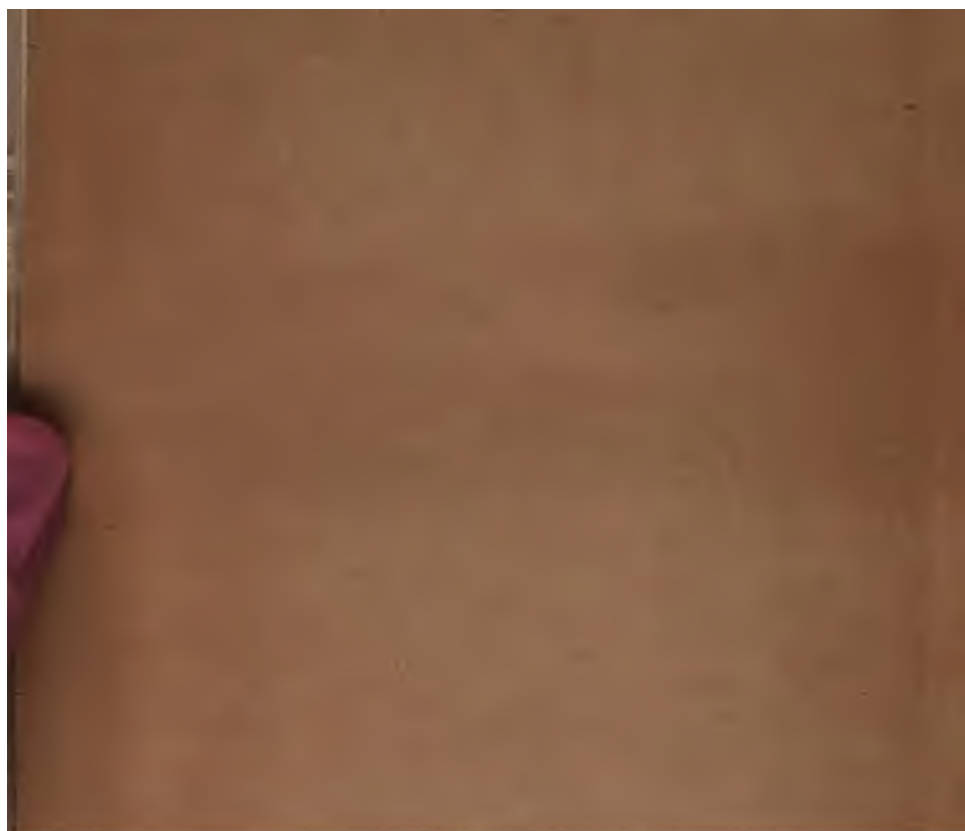
We may live like Achilleian comrades.  
But if to the winds you cast my warning,  
Murmur in your heart—why will you plague me ;  
Though this hour I'd fetch for you the golden  
Apples, or drag Cerberus from Hades,  
Then I'd let you call, nor stir to meet you  
At the doorstep ; cured of tyrannous longing."

THE END










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